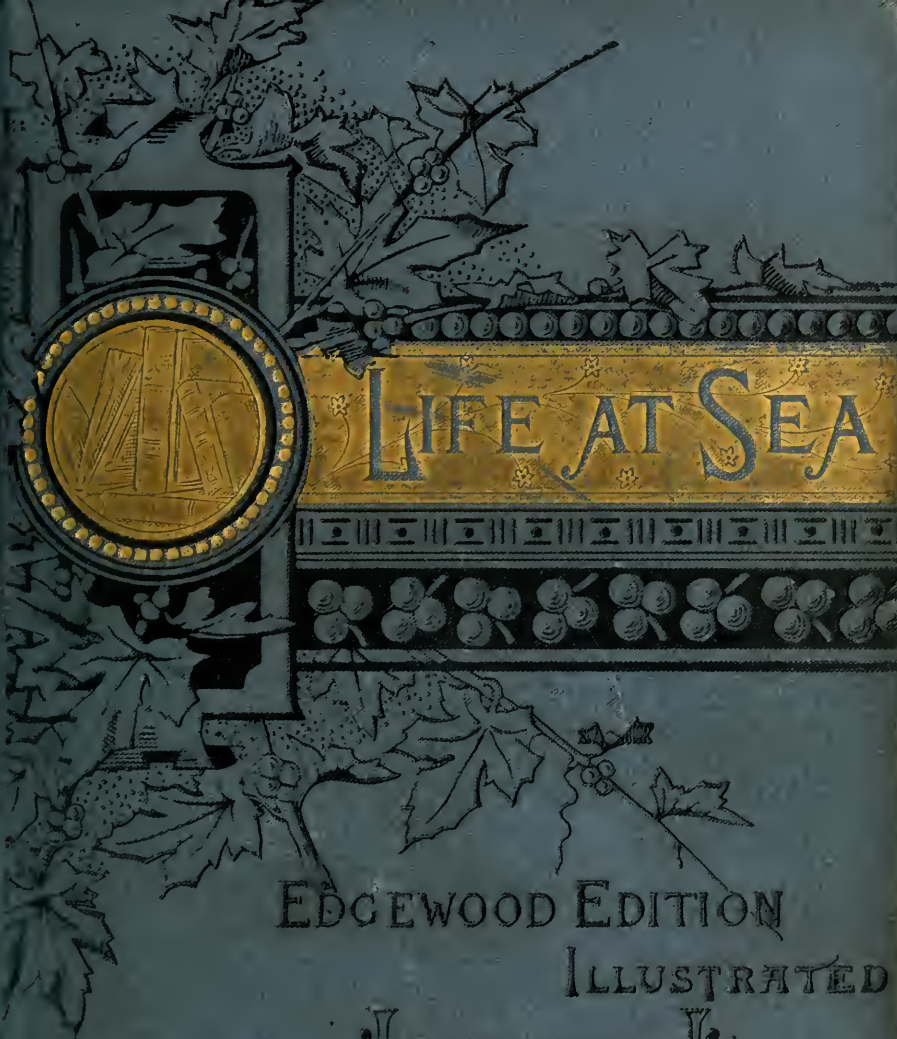




LIFE AT SEA



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LIFE AT SEA;

OR,

"ON SPECIAL SERVICE"

BY ORDER OF THE QUEEN.

BY

GORDON STABLES, C.M., M.D., R.N.,

Author of

"THE CRUISE OF THE SNOWBIRD," "WILD ADVENTURES ROUND THE
POLE," "STANLEY GRAHAME," "FROM POLE TO POLE," ETC.

WITH SIXTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS.

EDGEWOOD PUBLISHING COMPANY.

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P R E F A C E .

I FLATTER myself that I am already too well known to the boys of bold England to render a preface to this book a necessity. Besides, I know that boys do not read prefaces; *I* did not when I was a boy, and I would not if I were a boy again.

It would be, on the other hand, like carrying coals to Newcastle to praise THE BOYS' OWN PAPER, but it is only fair to that best of periodicals to say that the tale "On Special Service" first appeared therein.

GORDON STABLES.

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CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. THE FOSTER-BROTHERS	3
II. COLIN'S CHARACTER AND SCHOOL-LIFE . . .	19
III. COLIN'S FIRST SORROW—UNDER ARREST . . .	35
IV. LIFE IN A TRAINING-SHIP	49
V. GOOD-BYE, SWEETHEART, GOOD-BYE	65
VI. ON THE DEEP, DEEP SEA	79
VII. LIEUTENANT MILD MAY	93
VIII. THE ROMANCE OF A LIFE	109
IX. IN TOWARDS THE WEST LAND—A STRANGE SAIL	125
X. CAPTURE OF A PORTUGUESE SLAVER—MAKING IT "COMFORTABLE" FOR THE CREW	133
XI. A TRIP TO SIERRA LEONE—A "HIGH OLD TIME OF IT" ON SHORE	149
XII. AT SIMON'S TOWN—A DESPATCH FROM THE ADMIRALTY—A PIRATE AFLOAT	165
XIII. THE TRUE STORY OF A PIRATE—GOLAVA'S AD- VENTURES—CHRISTMAS AT MIDSUMMER	179
XIV. LIFE ON THE OCEAN WAVE—A YEAR'S CRUISE IN INDIAN WATERS—STRANGE ADVENTURES	195

CHAP.	PAGE
XV. BENBOW IN HIS GLORY—A BATTLE BY MOON- LIGHT	213
XVI. A BATTLE AND A CHASE—THE CORAL REEF— A HURRICANE SQUALL—A FIGHT ON A CORAL ISLAND	229
XVII. WARDROOM TALK AND GUNROOM CHAFF—ST. HELENA—A PICNIC ON SHORE—THE MADCAP GALLOP	245
XVIII. LENT TO A GUNBOAT—ROUGHING IT IN THE SERVICE—COLIN'S TRIALS BEGIN	263
XIX. NIGH UNTO DEATH—COLIN FINDS A FRIEND ON BOARD—LIFE IN LIMA—SAUVA ROSA	281
XX. AN EMBRYO MUTINY AND HOW IT WAS QUELLED —A PLEASANT VOYAGE—ISLES OF BEAUTY— SHIPWRECK	299
XXI. THE BURIED TREASURE—THE EARTHQUAKE— ALONE ON AN UNKNOWN ISLAND	317
XXII. BACK IN THE OLD "THEODORA"—SAILORS ON SHORE—FIGHTING INLAND—HAND-TO-HAND WITH SAVAGES	333
XXIII (AND LAST) — VICTORY — "THEODORA" AND "AURORA" ORDERED HOME — THE "FLAG OF BRITANNIA"	351

L

THE FOSTER-BROTHERS.



CHAPTER I.

THE FOSTER-BROTHERS.

YOUNG Colin McLeod's eyes were not nearly so wide open as they ought to have been, on this beautiful August afternoon. He was lying on the grass at full length, but with his head on his half-raised arm, because he did not wish the ants and other inquisitive creepie-creepies to get inside the collar of his shirt.

Books were close beside him—two of them—one open, one shut. Colin was meditatively chewing the white or root end of a rush, and his long dark eyelashes swept his somewhat pale cheeks ; but when he gave an occasional glance upwards at the trees above, it could be seen that those eyes of his were very dark, expressive, and somewhat thoughtful withal.

He had come to this wood all alone with the intention of studying, for it was Friday, and to-morrow an epitome of all the work of the week would form the subject of examination ; if he passed this, then—well and good ; if he should blunder and forget them—Dominic Clayton would go straight to the desk for the two-fingered hard leathern tawse, and Colin's fingers would soon after

have to smart for it, Dominie Clayton being what was called "a tickler with the tawse."

The book that lay open was "Arnold's Latin Grammar," and until it had slipped from his listless grasp, Colin had been deep in the mysteries of the gerund in *dum*, and the gerund in *do*. The other book was—let me whisper it—"Tom Cringle's Log." But, to Colin's credit be it said, he had brought it with him determined not to look at it until he had mastered his gerunds. Arnold meant work; "Tom Cringle" was to come afterwards as a treat and a reward, in the same way that a sugar plum follows the swallowing of a nauseous draught.

Now gerunds in "*dum*," and gerunds in "*do*," and gerunds in general, for the matter of that, are drowsy things at the best. But it was also a drowsy kind of a place which Colin had chosen for his study. He loved it for its very retiredness. It was on the banks of a stream that meandered through a wood, a good mile from the village, and a good mile from a house of any kind, except the keeper's little cottage in the clearing.

A drowsy kind of place? Yes, for the blackbirds and thrushes, that in earlier summer made wild melody in every bush and tree, were silent now; the nightingale had gone away long ago, and his rival, the blackcap, had disappeared from his perch in the thorn-tree; only the linnets were left, and woodpeckers, robins, and wrens; but deep down in

the darkest fir thickets cooed the cushat in mournful monotone. Then the air was filled with a drowsy chorus of insect life, flies of every genus, lazy beetles, madly-hurrying bluebottles, and bees of every "ilk and clan," some arrayed in orange and black, some radiant in purple, white, and crimson.

The day itself was a drowsy one, for it was very hot ; there was not a single cloud in the grey-blue sky, and the little wind there was, though hardly strong enough to move the sturdy needles on the lofty Scottish pines, went whispering through the feathery larches, and made drowsy music among the leafy oaks.

The streamlet itself sang drowsily in the sunshine as it flowed onwards between its green overhanging banks ; it sang to the big moss-covered boulders, round which it rippled ; it sang to the red-ticked trout that basked in the peebly pools ; it sang to the long, trailing, dank, dark weeds that floated on its surface, and it sang to a thousand lovely wee wild flowers that bent their bonnie heads and ducked them in the pools as if they had been instinct with life.

"Read I *must*," said Colin, half aloud ; and stretching out his hand, he once more took possession of his Arnold, and began to scan its pages. But ere long the book slipped down again, and became an object of interest only to a whole lot of tiny red spiders, whom their mother had brought out for an airing and to pick up some food.

The stream continued to sing, insects still hummed,

the cushat croodled in the thicket, and the wind went whispering through the trees, but Colin McLeod heard them not. Nor would he have heeded them had he heard them, for now a very strange thing occurred, or rather a whole lot of strange things, for, first and foremost, not three yards from where the boy lay, a perfectly round grass-covered platform was suddenly raised, like a little woodland stage, and that is precisely what it turned out to be. Then right in the centre, a kind of mist or smoke appeared, which gradually resolved itself into one of the queerest little old skinny men that ever Colin had seen in all his life. He was seated in a hard oaken arm-chair, and held a book in his hand; his face was as wrinkled as a raisin, his skin like old parchment, his lips as thin as the edges of an oyster shell, and his little dark beads of eyes winked and blinked in a way that was not at all pleasant to look at.

Something seemed to whisper and tell Colin that this was no other than the great Dr. Arnold himself.

"Now then," cried this strange being, "let the performance commence."

He had no sooner spoken than up from the green sward rose dozens of queer comical little figures and filed past him. And every one was uglier than the other. They were humped in back, crooked in legs, and as twisted and bent and gnarled, as if they had been made out of the branches of old apple-trees with the bark left on.

They were dressed in all the colours of the rainbow,

and in a fashion which must have been quite ante-diluvian, for Colin had never seen such weird-looking coats and caps before, and inwardly hoped he never might again.

Each one passed on the grass in front of the great doctor's chair, and each one as he did so doffed his cap and bowed low and told his name. It was what man-of-war's men would call a kind of "muster by open list."

Their voices were very thin and crisp; they were more like the voices of insects than anything else. Nevertheless, Colin heard all they said.

"I'm the Gerund in, 'dum,'" said one.

"And I'm the Gerund in 'do,'" said another.

"The Gerund in 'di,' by your leave," said a third.

"I'm a preterite!" cried a determined little fellow.

"I'm an active verb!" roared another, skipping past.

"I'm a preposition!" said a slower imp.

"I'm the verb 'to be!'" drawled a dandy, twirling his elfin moustache; "and I take a nominative before and a nominative after me."

"I'm alpha privite," said a very shy goblin.

"And I'm a past participle."

"I'm a conjunction."

"I'm an interjection."

And so on they went, till Colin thought they would never have done. Then they all began to dance, mingling and mixing themselves up together, and wheeling and whirling and waltzing in such an amaz-

ingly mazy, misty manner, that Colin's brain began to reel, and there is no saying what might have happened, had not the awfully skinny old man in the chair suddenly raised his cane. Instant silence was the result.

"Very good—very good!" he cried. "I dismiss the class!"

Then birds flew down from the trees, and bees and butterflies came from the bushes and flowers, and in a moment or two every imp and goblin among them had mounted a steed of some kind and disappeared in the forest. Last of all, the great doctor himself went off with a bang like a sixty-four pound cannon.

Colin started up and rubbed his eyes.

"How you did startle me to be sure!" he said.

"Surely Colin McLeod isn't afraid o' the sound of a gun!" said the new-comer—a strong, wiry young Highlander some sixteen summers old. I say sixteen summers in preference to sixteen years, though it means the same; but summer was indelibly fixed on the countenance of this keeper's boy. It had tanned his hands, it had burned his knees—he wore the kilt—and stained his face till his brow glowed like a marigold and his cheeks had the hue of russet apples.

When Duncan Robb laughed—which he very frequently did—he showed a set of teeth so white and so even that a queen might have envied him the possession of them.

Yes, summer was fixed indelibly on Duncan's



A STRONG, WIRY YOUNG HIGHLANDER.

countenance—and, let me add, sunshine on his heart. That heart of his was a very innocent one, and, as will be seen before our tale ends, a very bold and daring one.

Let me only add that he was four years older than Colin, to whom he had acted in the capacity of nurse and foster-brother ever since Colin was able to walk, and that there existed between these two lads, although born in different spheres of life, a tie of affection which few save mountaineers could fully understand.

“Afraid of the sound of a gun, Duncan!” replied Colin, his dark eyes sparkling and his face turning pink. “No, not quite; but I’m afraid I was asleep, and dreaming”—here he laughed,—“such a silly dream!”

“What was it? Let me hear!” cried Duncan. “Was it that all the fish had wings, and had taken to build nests in the trees, and that the hares and rabbits had taken to walking on two legs, and carrying black-thorn canes under their arms?”

“No, Duncan; worse than that. Sit down here, and I’ll tell you.”

Down sat Duncan, and listened very attentively indeed while Colin related his dream.

Meanwhile there stood behind Duncan a noble-looking pure-white goat, with hair of immense length, and a beard that, tall as he was, almost touched the ground. His horns went arching over his back down almost to his loins. This was Duncan’s constant companion in

hills and woods ; indeed, he followed him more like a dog than anything else. But Billy, the goat, had good cause to like his young master. He had been bought when quite a kid, to be killed as soon as his hair grew long enough to make a sporran for Duncan's father. Only before this took place Billy had developed such great sagacity and affection, and looked all over so wise and old-fashioned, that Duncan begged his father to spare his life, and his life was spared accordingly. With the exception of Duncan, the only one else that Billy cared a blade of grass about was Colin McLeod, and there he stood while the boy told the dream-tale, looking as wise and as reverend as an old judge, only now and then he chewed his cud in a contemplative kind of way, and old judges do not do that.

"But I'm glad you've come, Duncan. The sun is very high up yet ; suppose we have a game ? There will be plenty of time for me to do my verbs after that. Have you got the dam-brod ?" (Scottice, draught-board).

"That I have !" replied Duncan, and, bringing the board out of his jacket-pocket, he unfolded it on the grass. Then he took from his sporran four good-sized carrots, and handing two to Colin, kept two for himself.

"You cut the round men," he said, "and I'll cut the square ones."

Knives were speedily at work, and in a few minutes the men were ready and the game commenced. It did not seem quite so enthralling to-day, however, to

Duncan as usual, for, although by far the better player of the two, he made many ridiculous mistakes—suffered even single men to jump over and capture his crowned heads, and finally got fixed up in a corner, and so lost the battle.

“Have another?” said Colin; “there is time, you know.”

“No,” replied Duncan; “let us pitch the men into the burn. The fact is, my mind isn’t with the play; I’ve been thinking all the time about something else.”

“I thought I had beaten you far too easily. What were you thinking about—rabbits?”

“Rabbits!—no; I was thinking about you.”

“And my silly dream?”

“Well, that began it. But I don’t like your working so hard, and that old Dominie thrashing you almost every day.”

“But he told my father it was all for my good, and my father said no doubt it was, and that when he was at school he was thrashed sometimes five times a day.”

“But I don’t believe it!” replied Duncan, sturdily; “I don’t believe that all that Greek and Latin is doing you any good—nor the thrashing either. You don’t get fat on it, you know. Your face is much whiter than mine, and I measure fifteen inches round the calf. Fifteen inches, Colin; and if you measure twelve, it’s the most you can do.”

Colin looked at his foster-brother’s sturdy limbs and sun-browned hands admiringly, but did not speak.

"Now, what are you going to be," continued Duncan, "when you grow up? That is what I have been wondering all the time we have been playing draughts."

"Well, Duncan, I don't quite know. You see, my brother will be heir to the estate because he was born first, and I'll have to choose a profession."

"Ay," said Duncan, "that's the thing; there's the difficulty. You are a gentleman, and whatever you do when you grow up must be gentleman's work. As for me, you know, I suppose I shall always knock about with bag and gun, as my father did before me, and Billy here will walk behind me till his teeth fall out. That is good enough for Billy and me; but, Colin McLeod, everybody tells me you are come of one of the finest old families in Scotland, and you must keep up your name."

"Well," replied Colin, "so they say. My mother wants me to study for the Church."

"To be sure," said Duncan; "and that is what all the Latin and Greek are for."

"I suppose so; but, very dearly though I love my mother, Duncan——"

"The most perfect lady in the world!" cried Duncan, enthusiastically. "There isn't her equal in all broad Scotland, except the Queen herself!"

"Quite true," assented Colin. "But oh! Duncan, I'm not good enough ever to stand in a pulpit!"

"Well," said Colin, "you are quite right, then, never to think about being a minister, for I've heard

our own parson say that nobody should ever preach unless he feels he has a call for it."

"And I don't," continued Colin, musingly. "But then there is my uncle, Captain Peter, you know; he would have me be nothing else but a soldier—or rather a sailor, a real man-o'-war's-man, you know, just as he has been himself."

"That is what you *will* be!" cried Duncan; "that is what you are *born* to be. Heigho, man! poor Duncan's heart will break with sorrow the day you leave the glen. I have known and loved you all your life, and you are to me a brother—the only brother ever I had."

The tears were in good Duncan's eyes. Colin crept up closer to him and placed his arm affectionately on his shoulders.

"My dear brother," he said, "whatever betides I won't forget you, so cheer up. I feel that I am born to be a sailor, but is that any reason we should part? Couldn't you come with me? My uncle has lots of influence."

"Eh? What? How?" cried Duncan.

"Join the marines. You are strong and hardy; with my uncle's help and your own good conduct, you would soon get your promotion and be a sergeant."

Duncan laughed aloud with very joy.

"Hurrah!" he cried, "that will be splendid. Yes, I'd go like a shot. How clever you are to think of it!

You've made me happy for once. Good-bye. Come on, Billy."

But the goat had lain down in the shade of some silver-birch trees, and did not seem at all inclined to stir, so off went Duncan whistling to himself, but all alone.

Colin commenced his lessons again with redoubled vigour, and had soon mastered them so far as to have no fear of the coming recapitulation. Then he took up "Tom Cringle" and read a page or two, laughing as he did so.

"Yes," he said at last, "I'll be a sailor. I'm a queer boy, though; I really am afraid I'm not brave enough. All the other boys of my own age at school beat and bully me just as they please. My hands are very small, and I can't hurt them. I'll tell you," he added, speaking to himself, as if he was some one else, "I'll tell you what I will do. I'll ask my uncle to teach me sword exercise—he offered to the other day—and then when any boy challenges me I'll say, 'Certainly, but the party challenged has the choice of weapons, and I choose sticks.'"

As he spoke he picked up a hazel switch that lay near and commenced a vigorous onslaught upon a tall thistle that grew on the bank.

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared a voice he knew only too well; it was that of his greatest enemy. "Ha! ha! ha! what is the little boy trying to do? What is his mamma's darling about?"

The owner of this voice, which certainly was not a sweet one, sprang out of a thicket as he spoke and stood beside Colin, a great fat lout of a lad.

He laughed again, and, picking Colin's cap off with his finger and thumb, he held it for a moment high in air, then pitched it on the ground.

He next picked up the book and was about to put it in his pocket, when Colin flew at him and snatched it from his dirty hands.

"Ho ! ho !" cried the lout, "ho ! ho ! Now, look here, my little gentleman's son. Might's right, isn't it ? Well, I'm going to thrash you, then I'm going to put that book in my pocket, pitch your bonnet into the burn, and then go home to supper. Stop, I was thinking of taking my jacket off, but I won't—it isn't worth while for all the time I'll be, and you needn't take yours off either, you would feel the bats I'm going to give you if you had twenty jackets on."

Colin knew he would catch it, but he would not run, and next moment he was down on his back with his head towards the stream and his enemy kneeling over him holding him by the neck.

"Beg my pardon," he roared, tightening his grip.

"I won't, you coward !" cried Colin.

But assistance came from a quarter whence it was least expected.

Billy the goat stalked out. Billy seemed to take in the situation at a glance. The lout, as I have said, was on his knees, and his back was to Billy. Billy

backed astern, bent his nose for a moment to the ground, and appeared to take aim. Then he put on the steam, went ahead at full speed, and caught Colin's enemy straight in the rear, and next moment, after a hurried voyage through the air, that interesting youth found himself sitting on the opposite bank looking extremely foolish and very bewildered indeed.

Long before he had sufficiently recovered to know exactly where he was, both Colin and his friend Billy had left the wood and were homeward bound.

"Hul'lo, my lad!" cried Colin's uncle, who had come half a mile to meet him. "I've been looking for you all the afternoon. Glorious news for you! No such news since the fall of Sebastopol. You're going to be a sailor after all. I'm getting you a cadetship. What do you think of that, eh? You lucky young dog, you! Why, your old Uncle Peter feels quite a lad again when he looks at you."

At that moment I do not think Colin actually knew he was awake. He seemed walking on ether, his heart as light as eider down, his head up in the clouds. And Uncle Peter stumped alongside of him—he had a wooden leg—and kept up a rattling fire of joyful talk all the way home. But Colin only listened, he was too excited to do anything else. Besides, he really half believed that if he did speak he would awake and find it was all a dream, and that he was lying beside the burn in the wood with no other companions save Arnold, the gerunds in "dum," and the gerunds in "do."

II.

COLIN'S CHARACTER AND SCHOOL-LIFE

CHAPTER II.

COLIN'S CHARACTER AND SCHOOL-LIFE.

COLIN McLEOD was a peculiar boy, but as "there is nothing new under the sun," and as there doubtless have been, doubtless will be, and no doubt are at this moment, a great many boys more or less like him, there is no occasion for me to apologise for his peculiarities.

First and foremost, then, Colin was neither a big boy for his years nor a very robust one, nor was there any likelihood that he would develop into a very tall or very strong man.

Colin was a Scotch boy, and the son of a Scottish laird, one of the chiefs of a branch of a noble clan, the McLeods of Glenthora; but then all Scotch boys, or Highland boys, are not quite as you see them in the sensational pictures that sometimes grace the stories of—

"The land of green heath and shaggy wood,
Land of the mountain and the flood."

If you take these as types, then Colin's elder brother Roland was far more of a Scot than he, and a good

thing for that youth he was, else the lads of the glen would have had but small respect for their young laird. Roland was his father's favourite, and, though not much over fifteen, followed him, gun on shoulder, over moor and mountain, often from three o'clock on a summer's morning until seven at night—for indeed there seemed no possibility of tiring either father or son. Between the two of them they kept the house well supplied with fish and game from one year's end to another, and that is all that either of them ever did.

Time was when all the land and all the lakes that could be seen from the peak of Ben Vawn belonged to the chiefs of the McLeods of this particular ilk. *Tempora mutantur*, they did not do so now, and Roland's patrimony, when he succeeded to it, would be little more than a farm of average size, a heather hill or two to shoot over, a patch of pine forest and stream, and a tumble-down old building that once upon a time had been a castle, and might still be termed so by lovers of the antique.

But Roland's life was a happy one, if only for this reason—he was contented. Perhaps that was the reason also why he was so strong and hardy compared with Colin, for there were few lads of his age in the glen who could throw the heavy hammer such a distance as Roland, or compete with him successfully at “putting the stone” or “tossing the caber.” The sons of that gallant outlaw Rob Roy McGregor could, I am told by a scion of that line, bring down an

eagle from the sky—though soaring around the sun—with a bullet, or drive a dirk clean through a two-inch deal board—and this, too, when mere lads; and even at such smart practice as that I believe young Roland McLeod would have run them hard.

To Roland's credit be it said, he was good-natured and kind-hearted, and he dearly loved his "little brother," as he was fond of calling Colin.

Well, Roland would be laird, Roland would never leave the glen, but in good time marry and settle down in it, as the former lairds of Glenthora had done; but the world was all before Colin. He had his fortune to make, his career to cut and carve. The gentle lady-mother of these boys, whom both of them loved more than life itself, had laid her plans for Colin. She possessed that pride of birth or ancestry which is so common to this day among many Highland families, and, rightly or wrongly, she despised what is called "business." No doubt Colin could succeed in business if he tried, but the very idea of his entering an office, or standing anywhere near a counter, was distasteful to her in the extreme. Well, then, there were the four professions—the Kirk, medicine, the law, and the sword. Of these Mrs. McLeod preferred the first-mentioned—mother-like; and her brother, Captain Peter, preferred the last—sailor-like.

Captain Peter—he was never called anything else—had left the navy on half-pay and on a wooden leg, and settled down at the castle, and Colin was his especial

favourite, and many were the friendly after-dinner debates between him and his sister as to what the boy should be ; but as to Laird McLeod himself, he never interfered in the argument at all.

“ You'll make something of the lad between you, no doubt,” he would say, laughing, “ and I'm sure I can't do better than let you fight it out.”

In the meantime Colin—the bone of contention—was kept at school. The parish school it was, but my English readers must not imagine it was anything like the Government schools of southern Britain. No, for, gentle and simple, all went to this school ; the standard of education was high, and the seminary being connected with the Established Church of Scotland, as distinguished from the Free Kirk, the worthy dominie laboured hard to turn out better boys and better men than could be done by the other denomination.

There was a rivalry between the pupils or scholars themselves, too, which was not always so innocent, for the two schools often met on the field of battle, and combats sometimes raged night after night for weeks. In summer the lads fought with canes or wands, in winter with snowballs. It was great fun, upon the whole, and there was seldom any harm done by either army. Blood was always hot on both sides, but not very often spilt.

In these contests young Colin McLeod was a hero, for strength was not so much required as courage and skill, and the boy possessed both in a marked degree ;

his personal prowess was of little account, but he made an excellent leader, and was never more at home than when in the battle's van.

But alas for his peace of mind! his school-fellows forgot what they owed to their little captain almost as soon as the fights were finished. Internal dissensions were rife at this school. It was an unwritten law, but one which nevertheless was very binding, that every boy must take rank according to his physical abilities, and the big lads—I am sorry to have to record it—very often bullied the smaller, and beat them too; and it was probably quite as well in the long run if the weaker lads submitted to such treatment with all the grace they could command, looking upon it, in fact, as on the inevitable. But there were times when a small but spirited lad would throw off the yoke of allegiance, defy and conquer his burly oppressor.

"Væ victis!" or "Woe to the vanquished!" is an expression we constantly hear, but in this case matters were reversed—it was not woe to the conquered but woe to the conqueror, for the following is an example of what such a victory always entailed. Let B be a bully, and C, D, E, F, and G, five boys about his own size who are afraid of him, and who tamely submit to take a kick or a cuff whenever B, the bully, has a mind to give them one. Let H be a little hero, very much smaller than either B, the bully, or than C, D, E, F, and G, the boys who are bullied by B. Well, little H has long owned allegiance to B, but one day in the play-

ground, finding himself rather much put upon, he turns upon his oppressor. He is as wild as a mountain cat, he has crossed the Rubicon, he has struck B the bully, and he cannot now retreat, so he showers his blows like wintry rain, and in less than five minutes, very much to his own surprise, he finds himself standing, out of breath and pale perhaps, but triumphant, over the bully, who is prone on the playground, and pleading for mercy.

Ah! but H soon finds out that his is a dearly-bought triumph, for C, D, E, F, and G never looked upon H as their master, and never would, although they were submissive to B, and the mere fact of H's having conquered B does not make him king over them, so war is declared forthwith, and continues perhaps for a week and more, till poor H is so tired, so harassed and worried, that even B plucks up courage once more, and the small hero is deposed, and reduced again to the *status quo*.

More than once during his school career had Colin McLeod found himself in the position held by H as just described, for courage he never lacked, but strength—well, that had yet to come. Some might have thought that the fact of his being the son of a chief, would have gained the boy some slight respect at this Highland school. Not a bit of it, Scottish chiefs gained their position in olden times by personal prowess and physical force, and their descendants fall very much indeed in the esteem of the clansmen, if they are not

able to sustain by similar qualities the honour of the name bequeathed to them.

One of Colin's peculiarities was his fondness for retirement. He delighted in being alone. Now this was not a healthy trait in the boy's character; it was one he ought hardly to have fostered; it is one that is apt to grow on a youth, sapping the mainsprings of his life, and rendering him unfit to hold his own against the world, for it should be remembered that the great battle of life is carried on in the open, and that ambition, which is only begotten in solitude, can rarely be a true one. Ambition and work must go hand in hand. Youth is the season for activity, and a boy who wishes to do well in the world must be no idle dreamer. Let age

“fly concourse, cover in retreat
Defects of judgment, and the will subdue,
Walk thoughtful on the silent solemn shore
Of that vast ocean it must sail so soon,”

but youth must never think of rest, and never dream of failure.

Well, Colin was a nervous lad, and mistrusted his own powers. He was hardly as yet lord of his own heart. Was it a faint heart? No, but as yet an untried one, and yet one thought that gave him infinite pain and sorrow, was hardly ever absent from him in his solitary rambles—namely, the thought that he was not courageous. He would not call himself a coward; he did not believe he was quite so bad as that, and if

conscience had applied the epithet to him he would have wished to die. He was fond of reading of all daring deeds by sea and by land, but as he did read this question was always cropping up in his mind: How should I have behaved under such circumstances? And the answer he was compelled to give was invariably a painful one.

Now, think you, reader, that heroes good and true can be made from such material as, you can judge from what I have said, Colin McLeod was composed of? I say they *can*, and *are* every day, so let nervous lads take heart of grace. And this is true: the bravest men are those who can see the danger of a situation they may be called upon to face, but who face it nevertheless.

Rough though the school was, at which Colin received the groundwork of his education, it was a useful one. He learned many a lesson even in its playground.

Honest Duncan Robb, the keeper's son, humble though he was, had ever proved a friend of friends to Colin. This lad could see all Colin's good points, and many an encouraging little lecture he used to give him, for there was a great deal more in Duncan than his rough and humble exterior could have led one to imagine. His very love for his foster-brother it must have been that prevented him from seeing his faults, or if he did see them he thought within himself, "He'll grow out of all that," and so he said nothing about them.

But Duncan gave his foster-brother some useful

lessons as well as lectures. He taught him to climb, a very useful accomplishment for a boy who is to be a sailor, and at the time our story opens there was no tree in all the forest too tall for Colin to get to the top^{*} of; sometimes, indeed, while swaying about among their uppermost branches he looked, as Duncan said, "no bigger than a magpie."

He taught him to swim. His method of tuition was a peculiar, not to say dangerous one, and while we record we do not recommend it. He perfected Colin in all the motions and movements of natation on the bank of the loch, then he swam straight in with him into deep water—not telling him what he was about to do, of course—then simply shook him off. The dark waters seem to close over Colin's head, and shut out the world and everything in it. Then it suddenly occurred to him that he was drowning; this made him kick and splutter as a puppy would; but it immediately after occurred to him to go through the motions that Duncan taught him; he did so, and presently found himself swimming. His foster-brother had been close by his side all the time.

Many months after this, on a beautiful summer's day, making a bundle of their clothes and strapping them on their shoulders, the two boys swam out to an island some distance from the shore. They fished for some hours, then went into the interior to eat their lunch of bread and cheese and enjoy themselves. Colin, lying on the grass, pulled out one of Kingston's

stories and commenced to read aloud. He read and read, and Duncan lay and listened entranced. And thus

“The time flew by wi’ tentless heed,”

till at last they both awoke to consciousness of the fact, that the sun had gone down and that the wind had got up.

They had quite a long way to swim, and the surface of the lake was very rough indeed. The wind was in their favour, that was one good thing; but for all that Colin’s heart seemed to come disagreeably near to his mouth, as he gazed away over that dark and stormy water to the shore that looked such a long, long distance off.

“I’ll never be able to do it,” he said to Duncan.

“You never know,” replied Duncan, “what you can do till you try.”

“Come on,” cried Colin, “I mean to try.”

“Spoke like a McLeod,” said Duncan; and next moment they were both together, shoulder to shoulder, buffeting the waves.

The water felt terribly cold at first, almost paralytically so, but they soon warmed to their work, only the water constantly broke over their heads and prevented their breathing or seeing with freedom.

There was no talking, the work was too serious, only Duncan found time now and then to splutter out a word or two of encouragement.

But it got nearly dark before the distance was much more than half accomplished.

"I don't believe I *can* do it," said Colin, at last.

Duncan's reply was very brief. It consisted of but one word—"Fiddlesticks!"

Presently, however, he turned towards his foster-brother and said, kindly,—

"If you really are getting tired, you know, lean a hand on my shoulder."

But Colin McLeod said, "No, not for all the world."

Ten minutes after they were both dressed and laughing at the danger they had just come through.

"But," said Colin, "I'm so glad I didn't accept assistance."

Colin's uncle looked somewhat serious when told of the exploit, but he presently smiled.

"Duncan is a bold but a good lad," he said. "I'll do something for him if I can. He has given you a lesson, though; don't forget it. Life is all before you just as the dark and troubled waters of Loch Leean were. Fear life and its troubles no more than you feared the loch. Brave it, battle with it, buffet with it, and you are sure to be successful."

Captain Peter had worked away quietly, and was finally successful in getting the boy a cadetship in the Royal Navy. Then, and not till then, did good Mrs. McLeod give in, for she was, as many Highland ladies are, somewhat of a believer in destiny; so all she said to her brother when he brought the, to him, "glorious"

news was, "Well, dear brother. what will be must be. Perhaps it is for the best. I will not venture to oppose what may after all be the workings of Providence."

But there were tears in the dear lady's eyes when she added, "May Heaven in mercy watch over my darling boy, and guide him safely through every danger."

"Amen! Amen!" said Captain Peter, heartily. Then he pressed his sister's hand and hobbled joyfully away to meet young McLeod.

When, next day, Colin told the news to his foster-brother the effect upon him was very wonderful indeed, and to many would have seemed inexplicable, for first of all he flung his Highland bonnet high in air with a wild Highland "Hooch!" that resounded through the forest, and startled even the wild deer; then, as soon as the bonnet came back to earth, he leapt nimbly on top of it, and cracking his thumbs in true Scottish fashion, danced six steps of the Lonach fling thereon before ever he drew breath. After that he grew sad all of a sudden.

"It is no use," he said, drawing his sleeve rapidly across his face. "I'm ashamed to shed a tear, but—I cannot help it. Heigho! I'm going to lose the only one I love in all the wide world."

And Duncan threw himself face downwards on the grass, his intention evidently being to succumb to his feelings and indulge in the unwonted luxury of a cry. But no sooner was he down than he sprang to his

feet again, his eyes sparkling with excitement and determination.

"I have it! I have it!" he exclaimed. "I'll join the marines, as you proposed. I will."

Colin went back to school for a few weeks, but the news went there before him, and when he entered the playground on that Saturday morning, rough and uncouth in many of their ways as they were, the lads all gathered kindly around, and many a not over-clean hand was held out to grasp and shake his. Even the big lout whom the goat had pitched over the stream came up.

"Let bygones be bygones," he said. "Mind I *did* mean to give you *such* a thumping this very day. That brute of a Billy gave me a fearful fling. I shan't be able to sit down fair and square for a week. but—You're going to leave us. There, shake hands."

Well, Colin made a great many mistakes that day in his Latin epitome and exercise; plural nominatives took singular verbs, active verbs governed ablative cases, nouns in "um" were content with adjectives in "a," and gerunds in "dum" impudently usurped the places of gerunds in "do." But for all that the tawse rested quietly in the desk; it was never even once appealed to; and the blue eyes of Dominie Clayton beamed mildly over the gold rims of his spectacles on the pupil he was so very soon to lose.

III.

COLINS FIRST SORROW—UNDER ARREST.

CHAPTER III.

COLIN'S FIRST SORROW—UNDER ARREST.

“Revenge, at first though sweet,
Bitter ere long back on itself recoils.”

MILTON.

IT occurred rather suddenly one morning to Colin McLeod that he loved his father and mother, his brother, and his old uncle very much indeed. This was just about a week before he was to start south in order to join his ship. He had already been away to pass his first examination, which, thanks to the tuition of good old Dominie Clayton, he did so successfully as to score within one hundred of the largest number of marks that it was possible to obtain.

When the letter containing the joyful news arrived at Colin's Highland home, it was received with varied feelings of emotion by those to whom it was written.

The old running-postman brought the news about luncheon-time. McLeod himself tore open the letter in a more nervous manner probably, than quite became the dignity and stoicism we generally expect in a Scottish chief.

His wife sat anxiously watching him as he read it.

Captain Peter was all of a fidget with impatience. Ronald went quietly on with his luncheon, but he was thinking.

"I knew," said the McLeod, "the lad would never disgrace the name he bears. Bless his heart!"

Ronald was thinking that he might as well have gone to sea, or been a soldier and come in for a share of the pay and position inseparable from such professions, and he almost sighed to think there was and could be no chance of it; that he must stay at home and lead the life of a gamekeeper, or something very like it, a Highland chief indeed, but with no more means to support his position than that possessed by a Lowland drover.

Mrs. McLeod read the letter from her dear boy, and handed it to her brother without daring to speak, for the tears were welling up in her mother's heart and almost choking her. If the truth must be told, she would have been almost pleased had Colin failed to pass. Others might have said he was not clever, she would have put it down to nervousness, and been glad to have him back again.

Captain Peter read the letter, then pushed away his plate and pushed back his chair and took a few turns up and down the floor, stamping vigorously with his wooden leg as if to control some emotion of which he was ashamed. Then he shook hands with every one in the room, beginning with his sister and ending with the white-haired serving-man, Raoul Cabrach.

"This is a memorable day," he cried, "for the house of McLeod. That boy will be an admiral before he is a dozen years older. 'Raoul,' he continued, "run as fast as your aged limbs will carry you to Dominie Clayton's; tell him the news, tell him to give the school a holiday, and come over to the castle for a spell."

"To be surely, sir," cried the duinne-wassel, "she'll do that whatefer, and quick'll be her motions."

Raoul did not wait to put on his bonnet, but went off with a rush, his long white hair streaming behind him in the breeze.

Yes, in one brief week more Colin McLeod was to leave home to commence his cadetship. The week that had gone before had passed all too soon, and so would the coming one; then he would go from home, really from home, for the first time in his life, for what appeared long interminable months. He could not help noticing that his mother's eyes were frequently red, that his brother's manner was subdued towards him, and his father's softened from its wonted Spartan austerity; that he was even an object of mournful interest to servants and retainers. And so in his heart of hearts he loved them all for their love for him. He had always been in the habit of looking upon his uncle as—well, just a trifle peculiar. He had often laughed—he felt sorry and ashamed of it now—to see the old man stumping excitedly up and down the floor of the tartan parlour as he talked politics

with Colin's father, with that wonderful old wooden leg of his, which he would not have exchanged for a modern cork one for all the world.

"Shams, madam! shams! shams!" he had exclaimed one day to his sister, as she ventured to suggest the propriety of his investing in one of the new-fashioned flexible not-to-be-detected limbs. "Shams, madam. I'm not ashamed of my timber toe." Here he smacked it lustily with the palm of his hand as it stuck out from the chair in front of him. "I left the real one on the battle-deck of the *Bellona*, and I'd have parted with the other and clattered around on *two* wooden ones for the sake of my Queen and my country!"

The week passed by. I am not going to mention any of the sorrowful details of the parting. Partings are sad things at the best, and there is a deal about all of them that an author may well leave unsaid.

Of course Colin met the keeper's boy Duncan the day before in the dear old wood, their usual trysting-place, and there was a lump in the throat of each. They sat for a long time talking about the future, and Duncan still stuck to his determination to join the marines as soon as his friend should finally pass, and Colin promised to solicit his uncle's influence to get him into the same ship after his shore drill was completed.

They said "Farewell" at last, and Colin stopped in the wood to think a bit while Duncan marched off, trying hard to whistle.

Colin threw himself on the ground. "What a dear

quiet old place!" he thought. "No more gerunds in 'dum' nor gerunds in 'do' now, though. I'll often think of home when far away at sea. I daresay most boys would feel as I do. I hope they would. The only thing is that I mustn't ever be afraid to do my duty. I'll keep a journal from the very first, a log they call it; and I'll write a little bit every night to my mother and post the letter once a week. Must write to uncle as well. What a shame of me ever to laugh at him. But if——"

"Ahem!"

It was a voice close beside him; he had not heard the footsteps on the soft moss.

Colin looked up. There stood his big quondam foe, whom Billy the goat had so unceremoniously pitched across the stream. He looked half-ashamed.

"I knew you were alone like," he said, "and ran up to say good-bye like. Here is a little book, the 'Scottish Chiefs.' Will you take it, in remembrance like?"

This farmer lad might have been shy, but he was very sincere.

"I'll take it, and glad," cried Colin, "and I won't forget you, mind that."

"Good-bye."

"Good-bye."

Colin still stayed in the wood, thinking of his future life and prospects.

He was a romantic boy. I like a boy who is so; he

gets on in the world. The polish of his romance gets worn off by degrees, it is true, but there is a deal of good solid stuff beneath that stands the wear and tear of the world well.

There was one little matter in connection with Colin's preparation for the service that brought the colour to his cheeks. In reading one day the regulations in the Navy List relating to the entrance of junior executive officers—in other words naval cadets—he came across the following rules :—

“Should cadets bring valuable gold watches or chains with them to the training-ship, they will be taken from them and placed in security until they return to their homes. Silver watches will be allowed to be used.”

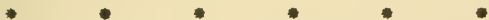
“Trousers to be made without pockets, and only one pocket on the left breast of the jackets of the two working uniform suits.”

Colin bristled up at this. “Do they treat their junior executive officers then as infants ?” he muttered. “No valuable watch ! We dare not take an heirloom with us. Do they suppose we would sell it, or barter it with the bumboat woman for gingerbread or sugar-candy ? No pockets in our clothes ! Do they imagine we would fill them until they bulged out with lollipops and apples ? Bah !”

Before Colin left his favourite seat in the pine wood, where he had spent so many happy days with his chosen authors, and—well, yes, his Arnold's Latin Exercises—he knelt down and prayed ; prayed a short

and simple but earnest prayer for courage to ever do his duty ; prayed for a strength that was not his own to guide him in every difficulty ; prayed too for those he loved. He felt stronger in every way when he arose.

"When I'm a man," said he, half aloud, "and have won my epaulets, I'll come back to this same spot and pray."



Farewells were said next morning. Then Colin and his uncle, Captain Peter, who had determined from the very first to accompany his young admiral south, started on their journey. He told his sister he wanted to see a ship or two once more, and have another sniff at the sea.

He was not dressed very modernly. Perhaps this is even a mild way of putting it, for when men come to a certain age they consider themselves quite independent of prevailing fashions ; so the hat Captain Peter wore, although to all appearance as good as new, was quite antediluvian in build ; that blue coat of broadcloth looked as whole and hearty as its wearer, and that is saying a good deal, but it was of a fashion and cut peculiar, it may be presumed, to some bygone age, because no one living could remember the fellow to it ; one leg was in a kind of knickerbocker of blue pilot, the other was the wooden one, and he carried in his hand a stick of such trusty dimensions that, need be, it could have served as a boarding-pike.

The wooden leg had, for this memorable occasion been scraped and stained, and finally varnished, by the captain's own hands. The work had cost him three whole days, and very proud he was when the job was finished.

When the carriage that was to bear them many miles to meet the coach, which would finally land them at the distant railway-station, had fairly left the castle, and Colin's grief was subdued if not assuaged, Captain Peter commenced at once to give his nephew advice for his conduct and guidance in the career that was opening out before him.

Now Colin was old for his years—in mind, I mean ; for the lonely life he had always led at his Highland home, had necessitated his falling back for pleasure and amusement upon books. He devoured all that came before him, so to a great extent he really had made himself acquainted with the literature of the day. And therefore, good although much of the advice was which his uncle was now vouchsafing, especially that portion of it which related to obedience to orders, strict performance of duty, manly forbearance towards his juniors, kindness to the men under his command, etc., all that related to the actual life he would have to lead was most decidedly a mile beside the mark. For the service, and all about it and in it, had altered completely since the days when Captain Peter had strutted the decks of a smart corvette in cocked hat, swinging sword, and much-bedinted spy-glass. The bluff old sailor had

forgotten all that—in fact, he felt so fresh and young at heart that he could not conceive how the years had flown.

But to all his uncle said Colin listened with patience and respect. At another time he might have smiled at some of the advice, so out of place was it ; but now—no—he loved the old man all the more for his very innocence.

Colin and his uncle reached the port at last, and the two together boarded the training-ship. Colin duly reported himself, and all the usual office preliminaries were gone through ; then, after a chat with one of the officers in the ward-room, his uncle, followed at some little distance by Colin himself, was shown round the ship. Captain Peter scanned and criticised everything with the eye of a sailor. Well, probably he *did* talk a little louder than there was any occasion for ; but Colin remarked, with a blush of shame for their insolent behaviour, that the peculiarities of his uncle afforded a deal of amusement to several of the cadets, and that they were merry at his expense even under his very eye. This led to an event, the like of which Colin would have shuddered to contemplate the day before. In his passage round the ship good Captain Peter made frequent use of the words—

“When I commanded the old *Furore*.”

Perhaps there was a slight ring of pride in them, which was excusable in so aged a sailor, and one, too, who had lost a leg in his country's cause. But the

words and the tone also were duly remembered by more than one cadet.

Colin was allowed to go on shore and bid his uncle good-bye, as he started for Plymouth. He came off again in the evening in a shore boat, the fellows who brought him charging him only three times the usual fare. Being tired, and a kindly-hearted cadet some two or three years older than he offering to put him up to the ropes, it was not long before he was in his hammock and sound asleep, and the next thing he remembered was some one shaking his hammock and delivering himself of the intimation that it was "Five bells, sir, please."

Colin soon became aware of where he was, and turned out, not very gracefully, it must be admitted—indeed, he really tumbled out. He fell on his nose, and this caused a good deal of smothered tittering and chaff. He was among the first up—some, indeed, could hardly be prevailed upon to turn out at all, and the quartermaster had to take the number of their hammocks.

Colin felt somewhat shy and uncomfortable withal, for he seemed in a hive of strange bees. He was not sorry, therefore, when Quentin Steele, the youth who had been his friend the night before, came half-dressed to say good-morning.

Many were quite as slow at dressing as they had been at getting out of their hammocks, and got up and sat on their sea-chests frog-fashion ; others laughed and

chaffed, and others, again, lent themselves to actual practical joking. Colin heard his name mentioned more than once, and his country too, in a way that was intended to do neither much honour. He paid no attention at all, but went quietly on dressing. At last a wet sponge struck him on the chest, entirely spoiling the breast of his white shirt. He felt chagrined, but made no remark. He simply placed the sponge in front of him beside his basin.

"Please give me my sponge."

He looked about, and saw a half-dressed cadet standing near him—a much smaller boy than even he was.

"Mind, I didn't throw it," continued the lad.

"No, I believe you," said Colin, aloud. "Cowards and bullies never throw their own things about."

Immediately after there marched up to him the bully himself; he was tall enough, in all conscience, but not at all hard-looking, and loosely knit together. He had tremendously long arms, though.

"I threw the sponge," he said, cheekily.

"Did you?" responded Colin, quietly taking his measure. "I thought as much. Well, I accept your apology before you speak. Go away and learn to behave better in future."

There was a general roar of laughter at Colin's coolness, amid which Master Burgess, or Bully Burgess, as the smaller cadets called him among themselves, retired discomfited.

Not for long, though. The shouts of laughing were soon renewed, and there was young Burgess strutting about the deck with an improvised wooden leg and a top-coat on.

"When I commanded the old *Furore*," he was saying.

"When I commanded the old *Furore*!"

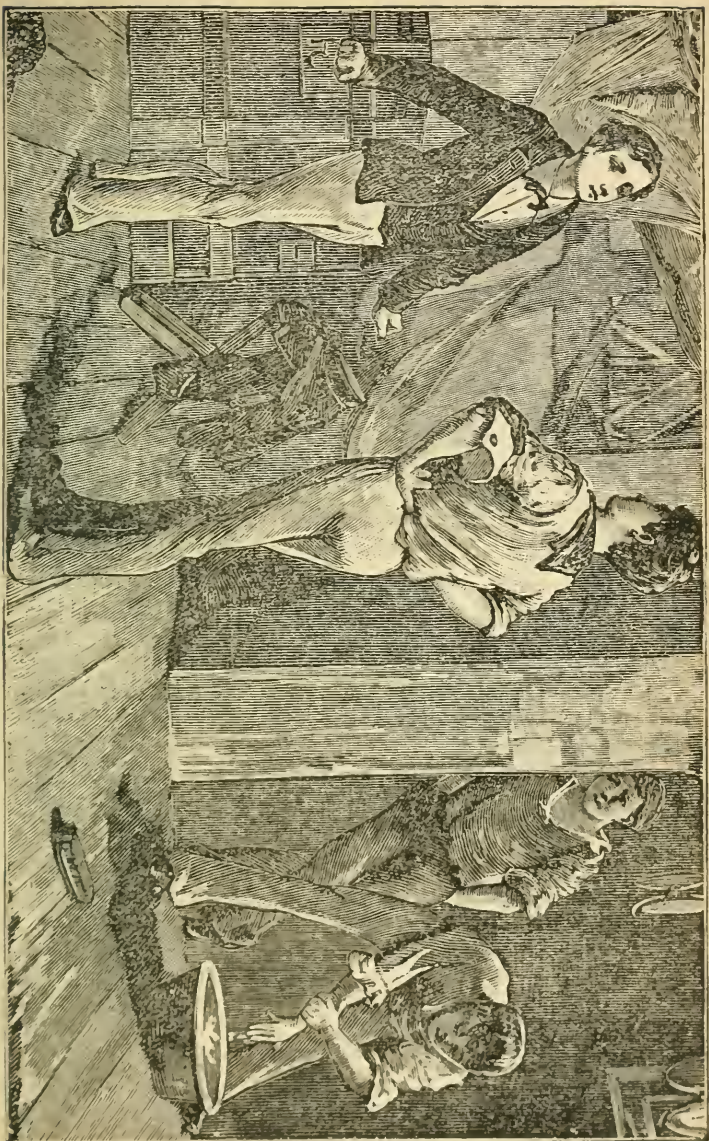
He brushed past Colin as he spoke the second time. The result may be imagined.

Both were wounded in the tussle; neither eyes nor noses were improved, but the bully was worsted. Colin would never have fought on his own account, but he felt he could die sooner than have his dear old uncle made the butt of unseemly jokes.

Both belligerents were reported. The commander would be on board next day.

"Bring them up to-morrow at twelve," said the first lieutenant. "I will not interfere. I know he will punish them severely. Meanwhile the two young gentlemen must consider themselves under arrest."

Under arrest! The words fell upon Colin's ears like the sound of an avalanche that would soon bury him alive. Under arrest! What a beginning! Nay, but would it not rather be an end to all his hopes, to all his ambition?



“HE COULD DIE SOONER THAN HEAR HIS DEAR OLD UNCLE MAKE THE HUTT OF UNSAVORY JOKES.” [Page 46.]

IV.

LIFE IN A TRAINING-SHIP.

CHAPTER IV.

LIFE IN A TRAINING-SHIP.

TO say that Colin was unhappy all that day would convey but little notion of the state of his feelings. Under arrest ! He had plenty of time to think—he was wretchedly miserable, and, naturally enough, he conjured up the very worst that could possibly happen.

He moved about, when he did move at all, like one in a dream. All the noise and bustle of duty going on around him seemed far away. It did not concern him—so he felt. These happy cadets had probably never disgraced themselves as he had done. How little he knew !

The men too looked so jolly and careless, he would gladly have changed places with any of them. Under arrest ! Disgraced and dishonoured already, and hardly a day in uniform ! He would be tried by court-martial or by “court of inquiry,” and turned out of the service ! And his dear mother ! Oh ! it would break her heart. And his uncle—well, there was some little consolation in thinking that it was on his account he had fought.

He could neither eat nor rest. At times he stood gazing out of the port. He had half a mind to jump

in and swim on shore—it was not so very far. But then that would be desertion, and not only desertion but downright cowardice. No, he would stay and brave it all.

It would make matters worse.

He wished so much to have some one to talk with, but all were busy, and the cadet who had proved his friend the day before had gone on twenty-four hours' leave.

The day wore away at length, and night fell; he was glad when he found himself in his hammock with all quiet around him, only the steady tread of the sentry heard overhead, or the noise of laughing voices in the distant wardroom. The night before he had fallen asleep with the semi-musical shout of "All's well" from the upper-deck sentries ringing in his ear. The sound was new to him, it breathed romance; it was a sound that he would hear every night of his life for years to come, a sound that was part and parcel of the career that was before him. To-night he heard it, and turned in his hammock and sighed. Gradually all sounds save and alone the sentry's tread died away, but Colin still lay awake, and every time the bells were struck he started as if they rung the funeral knell of his departed ambition.

He did manage to fall asleep at last, and his dreams were weary toilsome ones. No wonder that he awoke unrefreshed in the morning.

His friend Quentin Steele was still absent, so Colin

had few he cared to speak to. His brother cadets chaffed Burgess and chaffed Colin through Burgess.

"You'll be hanged this time, Burgess," said one.

"And your co-belligerent will be hung up by the toes."

"Doesn't Sawney look white?"

"White, did you say, he looks precious black about the eyes, anyhow."

"He'll look blue enough before long."

"Scotchmen are all green."

Colin took no notice. Twelve o'clock came round at last, and both delinquents were brought up before the commander, "planked," as it is called.

"Keep your pecker up, old man," said a voice close to Colin's ear as he was going on deck. Colin looked round; it was Steele. He had just come on board.

The commander—gold lace half up to the elbows—looked very stern. Colin was not sure though whether he was gazing at him or at Burgess, for, truth to tell, he squinted.

"Oh! Ah!" he grunted, as he heard the complaint, "fighting, eh? I know you, Mr. Burgess, but who is this young gentleman? A fresh face."

"Only came the day before yesterday, sir," said the quartermaster.

"Ha! ha!" laughed the commander, and it was a laugh that boded no good. "Only joined the day before yesterday. Pretty beginning, pretty mess you've made of it. Both equally guilty, I suppose?"

The prisoners did not speak.

"Well, we'll make short work of it."

Poor Colin's heart felt like lead at these words.

"One moment, if you please, sir," said Quentin Steele, coming boldly up in front of the commander and saluting him.

The commander looked at him over a book of some mysterious kind which he held in his hand, but did not speak.

Quentin told the whole story of Colin's arrival with his one-legged uncle, as the reader already knows it, and the scene next morning, Colin's forbearance, great provocation, and so forth.

"That's enough," said the commander. "Mr. McLeod, you may go. Don't take the law in your own hands again. Mr. Steele, I'm obliged to you for enabling me to put the saddle on the right horse."

The right horse *was* saddled, and so effectually that he did not leave the ship for a fortnight.

From that very hour Quentin Steele and Colin McLeod were fast friends.

It was not long now ere Colin settled thoroughly down in his new and certainly novel situation. He made many friends, perhaps even a few foes, for Colin was imperturbable. His first experience served him in good part. He was wise. He had learned a lesson, and a bitter one it was, so he determined to profit by it. He tried never to lose his temper, and when chaffed about either his accent or the land of his birth

he took it in good part, and if he possibly could, he laughed it off; if he really felt angry he kept silent.

So his messmates soon came to know his peculiarity.

"Look out," some one would cry, "McLeod's in a wrath."

"He's too quiet by one half," another would add.

"It's the lull before the storm."

"Look out, boys, the Assyrian'll be down presently like a wolf on the fold."

But Colin did not keep his anger long. He was soon pleasant and happy again and singing.

Even Bully Burgess made friends with him at last. This lad was always up to mischief and practical joking. He even endeavoured to get Colin to join him in some of his mad pranks, but in vain.

"Now, I say," continued Bully one day, "those fellows Smith, O'Brien, Marvell, Rae, and that lot, are constantly chaffing you about your country. Why don't you hit 'em? That's what I'd do if I had an arm like you; I'd have them out down here into the orlop-deck, one by one—take a day to each, you know, and some days you might polish two off. Think of it. Take my advice. I would simply say after lunch some day. Capital day Friday—work of the week about through, and if you half kill a fellow our old Sawbones will put him on the list till Monday. Do you catch?"

"Yes," replied Colin, "I catch, as you call it, but I won't hold. No, Burgess, the bait isn't tempting enough."

"Well, you're a dough-eater."

"Thank you, I prefer to continue on the same loathsome tack, Burgess; better be a dough-eater than a fire-eater."

"Very well," cried Bully, jumping up; "good-bye."

"The world is half made up of fools like you.
So—live in peace—adieu!"

Poor Bully Burgess! he was never long out of mischief, nor long out of hot water. And as for idleness—well, he used to say to himself that it was his strong point.

"You've heard," he said to Colin once, "or," he added sarcastically, "your reading has doubtless carried you as far as the story of the truant schoolboy who went on a fine day to a dog, and then to a bird, and then to a bee, and so on, asking them turn about to come and play with him?"

"I know, I know!" cried Colin, impatiently; "and they each and all refused. They had something else to do, and at last the boy went to school and settled down to his work like a man."

"Ah, yes," said Bully, "but only the first part of the fable suits my book. Mind that, and if I can't get anybody to play with me, why I'll play alone." Bully Burgess did play alone, and to some purpose, as will presently be seen.

Colin McLeod liked his new life very well indeed

after a time. The ship he was in was an immense great craft, in our hero's eyes at all events. She was partly school and partly man-o'-war. The lessons were not very hard, and there were about half-a-dozen naval instructors, to say nothing of French and drawing masters.

The life led was extremely regular ; even games and amusements were conducted with method. The strictness of the service routine was for a time rather irksome to Colin, newly from the wild, free hills as he was, but he soon came to like even that. For when duty *was* over, when work *was* done, then he could play with an easy mind and a clear conscience.

There was a naval instructor of the name of Baker, a man of some standing in the service, who, seeing how earnest Colin was in the pursuit of his studies, took a great interest in him.

"Come along," he said one day, "into my cabin. Bring your books ; you'll be quieter here.

"Now let us understand each other thoroughly. You can come in here every day when I'm not in. And when I *do* come in you are not to take that as a hint to fly away. Whenever I want you to leave I'll tell you straight. Only don't speak unless you're spoken to, and don't expect me to help you with your lessons ; at all events don't ask me, because I won't. I'm paid for doing my duty, and I do it. I'm not paid for doing anything extra, and I don't."

It was such a prettily furnished cabin, this of Mr.

Baker's. Not very large. There was the cot, covered with rich, soft rugs, two tiny cushioned chairs, and a neat rocking chair upholstered [ugly word that "upholstered"] in blue satin, a fairy chest of fairy drawers, a fairy washhandstand, a fairy bookcase with the best authors in the smallest possible compass, and fairy pictures,—chiefly of ships and scenery—all round the bulk-heads, with brackets in the corners with flowers. Then there were curtains and hangings wherever they seemed in place, so the whole cabin had an air of quiet refinement that was not only refreshing, but calmly impressive.

The great port windows were nearly always open, and the view that Colin saw therefrom was for ever changing as the ship swung with tide or wind. Now it would be the romantic old town itself, now ships and shipping only, now the far-off hills, and anon the sea itself. This latter Colin never tired of looking at. It was never, never the same, but whether tossed and foam-flecked with roaring winds, or calmly sleeping under a blue and windless sky, Colin felt he loved it. Was it not his future home?

Yes, it would be his future home if he worked now, worked, and worked, and worked, and never tired.

The rocking-chair was very luxurious. One lovely afternoon—it was a Saturday—Colin gave way to temptation; he took his Euclid and sat down in the rocking-chair.

It was very pleasant. Colin tried to study. "Let

A B C be a given triangle, the angle C A B a right angle, then the angles A C B and C B A are together——"

Colin never got any further, for the simple reason that he had fallen asleep. That rocking-chair was far too pleasant.

By-and-bye Baker came in. He smiled to himself and said nothing, but when Colin at length awoke, his Euclid was gone, and in its place on his lap lay a Bible, with a pin stuck through this verse—Proverbs vi. 9.

Colin never ventured to sit again in that rocking-chair.

"Look here," said Bully Burgess one morning, "I'm going to have some rare fun to-night. I'm going to give a quiet spread, and we'll have it out about the Scotch and English battles. I'm so sorry you are going on shore to-night and can't come."

Now, Bully really possessed talent, though he put it to a bad use, as may be seen from the following brief account of the last of his doings on board the cadet-ship.

All he invited came willingly enough to Bully's spread. He had managed to get together quite enough of the "good things," as he called them, of this life to make a decent show, and everybody said Bully wasn't a bad fellow at heart, though he had queer ways with him.

Now Bully had managed to get to his party a fair

sprinkling of Scotch cadets, and these he also managed to seat all at one side of the board. I am not going to say what were the viands Bully placed before his guests ; some of them were contraband and of a rather exciting nature. It was not difficult to lead the conversation back to the old days of history, when England and Scotland were at deadly enmity. Then some argument arising about the amount of slain at a certain battle, Bully quietly produced a couple of books of reference, putting one at each side of the table. They were old books, one written by a Scotch author, another by an English. It is needless to say that both gave a bigoted account of the battle. And it is almost needless to say that, their patriotism fired by Bully's contraband viands, argument soon raged high. Sad to say, words soon came to blows. A Scotch boy was kicked from under the table, apparently from the other side, but I doubt that Bully knew something about it. Then the boy who had been kicked and whose name was Douglas threw his work of reference across the table, crying in a mock heroic tone,

“ On as thou wert wont, brave heart,
Douglas shall follow thee.”

Douglas did follow, and the row that arose defies description ; but there are one or two wearing epaulets now in the service who remember it well.

This was the result. Three days after the battle Bully Burgess's father came down for him, and Bully

went away from the ship *in plain clothes*. No one pitied Buily, but I'm sure that many were sorry for the tall aristocratic soldier his father; he looked very sad, and felt his son's disgrace.

Many a time in after life did Colin McLeod look back with pleasure, on the happy and uneventful days he spent in that dear old training-ship. I believe when he left he had none but friends on board.

He passed with flying colours. His uncle was delighted. His mother was so glad to have him home for what she in her innocence imagined would be a long "spell" of leave—much longer than any of the previous vacations.

True to his word, Duncan Robb had joined the marines. Colin's brother did the best he could for him; he, too, was glad to have his brother back, and planned all sorts of fishing excursions for him, to say nothing of the pleasant days they were to spend together on the moors.

But in less than a fortnight Colin was ordered off.

"It is the exigencies of the service, my dear," Captain Peter explained to his sister. "Colin no longer belongs to us, but to his country."

Colin's mother was very sad, but somewhat proud withal to think that his country apparently could not get on at all without her boy Colin.

The truth is that Captain Peter himself was at the bottom of Colin's hurried departure. He had a friend or two at Court, and when one of these, who was down

in Scotland shooting, offered to get his nephew appointed to a flagship—

“Flagship!” cried the old captain—“flagship! Fiddlesticks! I want my boy to be a sailor. Send him down the coast a year; let him rough it. If he behaves himself, then we’ll get a good ship for him, but no flagships—no feather-bed business. I roughed it; let Colin do the same!”

So off down the coast (of Africa) went Colin in a gunboat. He did rough it, and when he returned to his father’s glen, just one year after, with six weeks’ leave to do as he pleased, he was as brown as a huckleberry, and as tough and hard as hickory.

Then he set himself to enjoy his leave, and I am bound to say he did. Well, he had earned it.

But one forenoon, Uncle Peter was heard coming along the hall towards the drawing-room, where Colin was quietly reading to his mother, and the old man was making such a clattering noise with his wooden leg that it was quite evident to everybody that something more than common was in the wind.

“Here you are!” he cried, bursting into the room and waving a long white official envelope over his head—“here you are! What a lucky young dog to be sure! Appointed to the *Theodora*! Think o’ that! And you’re only a baby! You’re off on special service too! You’ll go everywhere and see everything! Lucky young dog, you! lucky young dog!”

Colin's mother turned somewhat pale, and laid down her work. Colin went and kissed her.

"Bid me joy, mother," he said. "It will be a long cruise—a whole commission—but I mean to come back with my epaulets on!"



V.

GOOD-BYE, SWEETHEART, GOOD-BYE.

CHAPTER V.

GOOD-BYE, SWEETHEART, GOOD-BYE.

IT was a glorious day—breezy, exhilarating. You would have said so had you been walking among the woods of Mount Edgecumbe, that fringe the sea to the west of Plymouth Sound. The autumn tints were on the trees, the leaves came whirling down in showers; on some parts of the pathways they lay inches deep, and the bare-legged picturesque-looking children returning townwards with baskets laden with ripe, fat acorns, danced among them and skipped among them, and laughed to hear them rustle, while high in the branches above dark-tailed squirrels squatted and swung, eyeing the children's baskets with envious glances.

A glorious day among the woods, and a glorious day anywhere you might roam, in all the romantic country. But across the wilds of Dartmoor, had you been making your way, you would have felt the full force of the breeze, and, had you been a sportsman, you hardly would have thought it so glorious there.

Then seaward had you looked, you would have noticed that Neptune's lambs had come out to play, for

the wind blew stiff and strong directly down Channel, and skippers of ships and craft of every kind, beating havenwards with scanty canvas, could scarce have said it was a glorious day at all. Yet they might have had worse weather, for the sky was blue overhead, and the few white clouds there were, gave ample promise that, however stiff the breeze might be, it would be a steady one.

"A glorious day, sir," said Lieutenant Mildmay to his commander as they stood together on the quarter-deck of the *Theodora*.

The vessel lay at anchor in the harbour, the outermost ship, and some considerable distance astern of the *Royal Adelaide*, on which the admiral hoisted his flag.

The captain gave no direct answer just then. There was a frown on his not over-handsome face, so it was perhaps as well he did not speak at once.

He was looking at the stores with which the decks were littered, he was listening to the clang, clang, clang of the carpenters' hammers in the ward-room beneath their feet, he was sniffing with supercilious nostrils at the odour of fresh paint.

He gave one impatient glance around him at last, up at the sky, and out across the Sound to the Breakwater, then he took two or three rapid turns up and down the somewhat dirty deck, as lions chafing at their thralldom do in their cages ; then he stopped short, just where he had done before, but he did not look at his lieutenant as he replied,—

"A glorious day! Was that what you said, Mr. Mildmay? Of course it is a glorious day, that is the worst of it. A glorious day, and we ought to be out in it instead of hanging here by the nose, like an old hulkus-culkus. A glorious day, indeed, and a glorious wind blowing right down Channel, and we ought to be feeling it, and half way across the bay by this time. But just look at the abominable mess we're in."

"Well, sir, I've been a bit short-handed for the last fortnight. If they won't send me more men from the dockyard when I apply for them, what *am* I to do?"

And Lieutenant Mildmay smiled in a conciliatory kind of way. The smile did not move nor mollify the captain in the least.

"Yes, yes," he replied, curtly, and somewhat cruelly, "laugh away, laugh away. *I* can't afford to laugh."

He paused, then he stamped on the deck so loudly that one blue-jacket at work beside the windlass looked round, and, noticing the dark look on the captain's face, winked to his companion.

"Ain't he in a flame, Bill?" he said.

"He's a hot 'un, I guess," said Bill. "But heave round."

"I used to be considered a smart officer," continued Captain Blunderbore, "but now, sir, under the circumstances, I could positively excuse Admiral Fuzzgig if he tried us by court of inquiry. I really could, sir.

"Mr. Steele joined yet?" he added.

"No, sir; he will to-day, I believe."

"There again you see—there again; only that useless young sprat of a McLeod to help the stores on board."

"Yonder he comes now, sir," said Mr. Mildmay; "and I really think the boy does all he can."

For the first time since they had commenced speaking the captain looked his lieutenant in the face; and there was a curl on his lips, half sneer, half smile, as he said,—

"I've been shipmate with you before, Mr. Mildmay?"

"Yes, you were," replied Mr. Mildmay. "We were in the gun-room together for a year in the old *Duncan*. I was then mate, and you were midgy."

"I did not refer to that time," the captain said, interrupting him. "Call away the gig," he added.

A glorious day for those on shore, among the woods or on the moors; a glorious day for those in ships in harbour, whose officers had little to do but walk on white, clean decks, or gaze listlessly overboard and watch the sea or the flocks of busy gulls that screamed around or floated on the water, like miniature frigates. Hardly a glorious day, however, for Colin McLeod, who is now coming towards the *Theodora* in the biggest cutter, laden to the very gunwale with stores for the ward-room and gun-room, an extra hand or two in the bows, a few red-coated marines crouching down wherever they can find room; the ship's steward, the messman, and two other marines in the stern-sheets, with

the cox'ain perched up right aft, tiller in hand, while he himself has barely standing-room.

A glorious day, indeed ! Colin is *so* tired now ; ne has had nothing to eat since morning, and his face looks pale as he lifts his cap to wipe away the perspiration with a handkerchief, which—pardon the comparison—looks absurdly like a bicycle rag.

A glorious day ! It has been the hardest day, or one of the hardest days, ever he remembers. In that cutter he has been, off and on, 'twixt ship and shore, since one bell—half-past eight—in the forenoon watch ; and now it has just gone one bell in the first dog watch from every ship in the harbour—a perfect Babel of bells. He might have found time to dine, but he only took a standing bite, for there was nobody to take his place, and watches had not yet been set.

On shore he has had constant irritation. The working parties have been on better terms with themselves to-day than usual ; which means that they have been more full of talk and joke, and chaff and song, and consequently not so full of work, so he has been worrying himself keeping them at it. He knows all their names ; he has been down here ten days, and a hundred times at least this day has he had to order “ Jones ” to keep silence, or “ Harris ” to go on hauling, or “ Jack Brown ” to keep his eyes at his work. Jones, Harris, or Jack Brown never failed to reply respectfully,

“ Ay, ay, sir.”

But that made little difference to the case in point,

for what cared they for Middy McLeod? Well, he might report them, but well they knew he would do nothing of the sort.

He was only a mite of a middy even yet. Smaller even than he ought to have been for his years; small, but good-looking and smart withal, and strong as well. A mite of a middy, but a muscular mite, for all that.

In some streets adjoining the corner where his boats landed were shops with viands in the shape of rounds of roast beef, boiled hams stuck all over with cloves, and sausages swimming in steaming brown gravy. If it had not been for his uniform Colin would have rushed into one of these tempting emporiums and enjoyed what schoolboys call a "good tuck-in."

But the sorrows of hunger and hard work were not all that Colin had had to endure that day. He had had to stand a good deal of chaff from that good-natured but somewhat thoughtless animal the British public. They spoke at him, about him, or directly to him, but never unkindly.

"I say, Dick," said one immensity of a shore-porter, "he bees a little un, bean't he?"

"You shut up, 'Arry," was Dick's reply. "That's one of the bold defenders of our native land."

Passing a greengrocer's shop, where two women stood bargaining—

"Haven't you left your mammy too soon, dear?" said one.

"Let the child alone; he'll grow," said the other.

"And so will his sword," retorted the first speaker.

The men did not hesitate to titter at these remarks, though Colin grew scarlet with vexation.

Perhaps Phelim McKoy, an Irish blue-jacket, noticed the confusion of his officer, and it was to comfort him he said,—

"Sorra a bit o' notice I'd take ov it, sorr. There's the makings ov a man about you, sorr, sure enough."

Well, it was vexing that, when Colin was all ready to go off with the last boat two of his crew should be missing.

He went to find them, and did. They begged his pardon—said it was the first glass of beer they'd had to-day, and in triumph he marched them to the steps, only to find two more had gone. He found them next. They had only just run up, they said, for a "bit o' baccy," but when Colin got back the second time and found the other two had gone, then he lost his temper.

"Jump in, steward," he said, "we'll go off without them."

He went twenty yards from the shore, when the truants returned.

Silly midshipman that he was! He ought to have gone right away off, and those two men would never have put foot on English ground again for years and years to come—if ever. But he had not the heart.

He is going off with the last boat, then, pale, tired, and worn. Now he meets the captain's gig swinging shorewards with the speed of a Thames racer.

So oars have to be tossed, and Colin lifts his cap.

The only notice the man of four stripes takes of the salute is to draw the forefinger of one hand rapidly across his nose—a long hooked one—as if brushing a midge off.

The wind caught the bows and swept the cutter some way round till she seemed about to start down Channel, and the captain was heard by his own crew to growl out the word “Awkward !”

But matters were soon put to rights, and at long last they are by the portside, and Colin, all his feeling of fatigue departing in a moment, runs nimbly up the rope ladder and goes to report.

Down below he went next to have a wash, put on another jacket, and swallow some tea that his servant brought him.

Who do you think that servant was? You guess rightly, it was Duncan, the keeper's boy, but quite a soldier now, and as quiet and respectful to his master as if he had never played “dambrod” with him side by side in the old pine wood.

Captain Peter had managed this transition to the satisfaction and comfort of all concerned.

“Oh! Duncan,” said Colin, when he was at length dressed and ready to go on deck, “I’ve been so hungry all day, but I don’t feel it a bit now.”

“Have you really, sir?” was the reply.

“Look here, Duncan,” said Colin, in a low voice. “You are right to call me ‘*sir*.’ Let us begin as we

are to go on. You are right to call me 'sir' on all service matters, on or off duty, but when we are quite alone, and it isn't a matter of service, let us be the same to each other we always used to be. Be thou my foster-brother as of old. Do not let the recollections of our boyhood's days fade quite away, Duncan. I would have every scene in our native glen—forest and moorland, lake and stream, the green woods and purple hills—to dwell in my memory for ever, and wherever we go, as bright and clear as a painting on glass."

Duncan did not reply. He busied himself arranging his foster-brother's sea-chest. His heart was too full to reply, and Colin knew it, and said nothing more.

When Middy McLeod went on deck again a very joyful surprise awaited him. Quentin Steele was there!

There was an almost mischievous smile on his handsome face as he advanced to meet Colin with hand extended.

"Why, Quentin! My old sea-dad! You here! You've come to say good-bye?"

"Not yet a little. I've just joined the ship. We sail together."

"We do! And you never wrote to tell me!"

"No, old man, that was my joke. I wanted to give you a startling surprise."

"Well, it is a pleasant one. I'm as happy as happy now."

Arm-in-arm the two strolled away forward together, and were soon in deep confab under the fore rigging.

So interested were they indeed in their conversation that they did not hear a light springy footstep close behind them. They both started and looked up, for a hand was laid on the shoulder of each, and there, towering above them, for he was a tall and squarely-built man, stood the first lieutenant. He was all the sailor, not only in build, but in the way he wore his dress. His frock-coat was open, his waistcoat, a white one, his cap well up over the brow, but *not* over the hair; his shirt-front and cuffs were faultless, and diamonds glittered in them, but the neck was very loose.

Poor Mildmay! he was a man who had positively turned grey in the service, waiting and waiting for the promotion that never came. He had no interest, save the interest of honesty, bravery, and strict attention to duty; his very strictness in the matter of duty had on more than one occasion offended people in high places. Be this as it may, the fact remained that Mildmay continued a lieutenant at forty-two, when he ought to have been a post-captain.

Mildmay had a very handsome face, a shapely, somewhat aquiline nose, a high white brow, thin mobile lips, and brown eyes, the expression of which was at times almost womanly in its serenity. He shaved all his face and permitted his hair to grow long—locks, in fact, that waved behind his ears and neck.

He looked very engaging when he smiled, and very sincere, but sword in hand on the day of battle, Irving himself never showed a fiercer face.

Have you got him in your mind's eye, reader? I nope you have. The sketch is no fancy one—he was the writer's sea-dad.

"I'm glad to notice," he said, "that you two young gentlemen are old acquaintances. I want you both to come and dine with me."

"With pleasure, sir," said Colin, "but when?"

"To-night. Now. The first bugle has gone. The second will go in twenty minutes. Go and get ready."

Both Quentin and Colin were somewhat shy at first in the ward-room. It was a very small dinner-party, however, for the officers had not all joined. Mildmay very soon set them at ease. He was all attention to their every want, though he did not seem to force attention on his young guests. It was evident he not only understood boys but loved them. He kept them laughing all the evening with his whimsical talk and his strange stories, and when he dismissed them at last, both averred that they could not remember ever spending so pleasant an evening before, either ashore or afloat.

Another week of hard work to all on board, then things began to grow ship-shape; the decks were cleared, the stores were stowed, painters and carpenters had done their work, the officers had all joined, and the good ship had left her moorings, slipped away out, and anchored—all ready to sail—between the Hoe and the Breakwater.

There they lay waiting for orders to leave.

They came at last, and steam was got up, and boats got in. Quite a fleet of small craft, however, surrounded her. In them was the blue-jacket's sweetheart, the blue-jacket's wife, the blue-jacket's mother, and sister, and children, and many were the tear-bedewed handkerchiefs waved after the brave *Theodora* as she moved slowly away at last.

And from over the water came the plaintive notes from the flagship's band of that sweet old song,

“Good-bye, sweetheart, good-bye.”

VI.

ON THE DEEP, DEEP SEA.



CHAPTER VI.

ON THE DEEP, DEEP SEA.

THE *Theodora* was slipping along like a veritable eel through the water. From stem to stern she really looked a beautiful craft. She might have had more breadth of beam; if she had, she would not have been so fast. She was full-rigged, but the masts—masts of hollow iron—looked by no means bulky, nor the rigging cumbersome. In fact, there was something almost foreign in the latter; they were extra long yardarms, the sails had a more jaunty cut about them than you usually find in your sturdy Britisher, and any one used to a seafaring life would not have failed to perceive that the very canvas itself was of a lighter texture than the ordinary Dundee. It looked as though it would reef more easily, and would catch and hold the wind better, but it was none the less strong for all that.

The *Theodora* was a black craft, black all over the hull, with the insides of her ports picked out with vermilion. There was little or no rake about her masts, so she did not look what sailors call “saucy,” but she looked a viper—that is the word. Manned

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with true British sailors, there was no "give in" about a ship like this; an enemy might sink those colours, but they could never haul them down. You would have felt that, had you gazed on her as she went glancing over the Bay of Biscay. Had you been a sailor homeward-bound and observed her from your ship's deck you would have said to some one near you,—

"Yonder goes a man-o'-war; she is outward-bound, and looks business from bowsprit to binnacle."

There was not much noise on deck, where the surgeon, and Benbow the young navigating sub-lieutenant, were walking up and down in that brisk and hurried manner peculiar to sailors in temperate climates. It was getting near evening. The sun was declining in a bank of grey-blue clouds, and though there was no sea on, a big tumbling swell was beginning to roll in from the wide Atlantic, and if it came on to blow the *Theodora* would have it "ugly."

There was little noise, then, save the churn-churning sound of the screw, for the engines were well down amidships, and the *Theodora* had a fighting deck beneath the upper one, which was flush. With the exception of two, all the guns, ten in number, were on this middle deck, and abaft of it was the captain's quarters; beneath was the ward-room, and to one side of the steerage, as you might call it, on the starboard side, just outside the door of the ward-room, was the gun-room.

So you will perceive the *Theodora* was a kind of small corvette. She was built for speed and strength,

and had an armament that you could have done well-nigh anything with.

"And you think it's going to be a puff, eh?" said the surgeon.

"My dear boy," said Benbow, "it's going to be a blow, not a puff! Then we'll see what the *Theo* can do. But it strikes me she is staunch and true, and there is no doubt about one thing, doctor—we've got the heels of every ship in the service."

"Have we, think you?"

"Think?—I'm sure of it! I don't say we can knock twenty knots out of her——"

The surgeon laughed aloud.

"Ah, you may laugh! but put us to it, and we'll come precious near it."

"Well," said the surgeon, "she ought to have been called the *Hornet*."

"Why?"

"Because she can sting and fly away."

"Egad, sir! but she can sting and stay. Sting and stay—sting and hang on like a bulldog!"

"You like her?"

"I do, doctor; don't you?"

"Don't know anything about her yet."

"But I do, though! I saw her built at Pembroke Docks; I know every bolt and timber and plank and plate in her. She——"

What more Benbow was going to say may never be known, for the captain's steward came up and saluted.

"Captain wishes to see you, sir."

"Me?" said the doctor. "Be there in a moment."

He was back again very soon. He was laughing, but quietly, as if to himself. The doctor stood six feet two in his shoes; Benbow was little over five, so the one looked up and the other looked down.

"The captain's sea-sick," said the surgeon.

"You don't mean it! Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I do! Well, that is the result of having friends in high places, who keep you in a harbour ship till the bottom of her rots out. Just the way of the world! There is dear old Mildmay yonder—been at sea all his life, and done many a plucky thing, and he's only first lieutenant yet."

"And an older man than the skipper."

"Yes; can give him two years."

"Well, I'm off below to the gun-room."

"Why, aren't you in the ward-room?"

"I'd just as soon be where I am. Besides, the youngsters want looking after, you know. Look in and see us often, won't you?"

"That I will! Good-night."

All ships are merry when homeward bound, but I like to see the crew of a craft happy even when sailing away from home. It shows their hearts are in the right place, and that they really are, nowadays, as in the days of Drake and Nelson, hearts of oak. To use a homely expression, the men of the *Theodora* were all "as happy as sandboys."

So long as the screw was grinding and the pulses of the great engines working steadily, little else could be distinctly heard ; but when the wind freshened, then, as it blew pretty fair, being abaft the beam, fires were banked and sails set, and from the deck, where the men had their messes and did all their work, a murmur could be heard as from a bee-hive, interspersed with many a hearty laugh, showing that somebody or other was spinning a yarn, and many a snatch of song or song complete. And even the men on deck, in the intervals of trimming sails, gathered together in little knots, and their busy conversation, carried on in a low tone, showed that their hearts were full, and that they were glad to interchange ideas.

But neither in the gun-room nor in the ward-room itself was the sandboy element entirely absent. Though the chalky cliffs of old England had not long disappeared, all had settled down and felt quite at home.

Only two individuals were far, very far indeed, from being either happy or comfortable. One was the captain. He was down to it, as the doctor explained. The other was Mr. Han D'Austin, the paymaster's clerk. He, too, was "down to it." A tallish young man he was, of fair complexion, and of very delicate, though aristocratic features. It was his first voyage, and he looked but ill able to rough it. He had no cot or couch to recline on like the captain. He was excused duty for a day or two, that was all, and expected to get round in that brief recess.

He lay about wherever he could get lying room—on the lockers, on a sea-chest, where he had to curl his long legs under him, and lean on his elbow, looking for all the world—so Benbow told him—like a devil-fish in a glass tank.

Poor Han D'Austin had to stand a good deal of chaff from his messmates. Even his English, which was, like himself, of quite an aristocratic tone, was criticised. The marine officer, Captain West, was a gentleman of the same type. He had been to sea before, however, but never long enough to rub the *bon ton* polish off him. He also mouthed his English, and murdered his "r's," and, as Benbow said, was altogether too new and too good for a ship's mess.

"I was nevah used to this sort of thing," D'Austin explained to Colin, who had come with the intention of doing him a service. "If my father and mother knew what I am at this moment suffering they would be inconsolable, I do assure you. Believe me, McLeod, low though you now see me, pwostwate on this howid sea-chest, only one short week ago I was the centah of an admiwing gwoup of family welatives."

"Ha, Mistah Austin," cried Benbow, "can I do anytling foh you? Delighted, I'm shuaw. Shall I send the steward with a basin and a feathah!"

"I don't want your basin no' your feathah," cried Austin, angrily; "leave me alone, sir."

Benbow was by no means a bad-hearted little fellow, but for his years he was a terribly rough old salt.

"I'm the oldest member of this mess," he explained, the first day they all sat down to dinner. He knocked on the table as he spoke by way of drawing attention. "I'm the oldest member of this mess, and I mean to exact respect from you youngsters, d'ye hear? and if anybody crosses my hawse, let him look out for squalls. Now fall to and take your dinner. Mind, I'm caterer, and I tell you it isn't always nor often either during the commission, that you'll settle down to such a good dinner. Fall to. Wait a minute, Quentin Steele, you will take turns every day with McLeod in asking a blessing. Don't have to be reminded of that. Brown, you young son of a gun, take your arms off the table. Who are you, and where are you going?"

"I am a midshipman, sir."

"I can see as much from your togs. Don't look scared, but answer me."

"I am a supernumerary, sir. Going to join the flagship at the Cape."

"Stupid numerary, are ye? Glad to hear it. We'll soon get rid of you. Don't put your elbows on the table again."

"No, sir."

The wind continued fair, the "blow" that Benbow had prophesied never came, but great seas continued to roll in from the Atlantic, and on these the *Theodora* rolled and pitched, or combined the motions of pitching and rolling, in a way that seemed very satisfactory to the ship herself, if not to all the crew.

One evening, about a day before the vessel reached Madeira, the wind, that had gone down so far as to permit of stu'nsails being set both below and aloft, began to freshen up towards sunset, and there were some indications too of squalls. The sky in the east, though, was a sight to see. It was filled with rolling clouds, great banks of cumulus, grey beneath but white as the driven snow on the tops, and the spaces between these, the rifts in the masses of cloud, were of an intensity of blue that could hardly be equalled.

But lower down and quite close to the horizon the interspaces were green. And these clouds went drifting over the firmament at a speed that told old sailors on board the *Theodora*, that there was far more wind high in air than below on the sea's surface.

The sun went down at last behind the western waves, and appeared to set them all aflame. The sun went down like a round red burnished copper shield, and hardly had it disappeared when directly in the east over a bank of grey-blue mist up rose the full moon, and so like in every way was it to the orb of day, which had just gone out of sight, that the ship's boys laughingly pointed to it and cried, "Hurrah! the sun's up again, boys. Morning has come, and we have never been in bed."

Studding sails had been got in two hours before moonrise, then a reef was taken in in the topsails, but still the wind freshened and freshened, and the ship went tearing through the waves, cleaving the dark

water with her bows as a knife would have done, and leaving a broad, foaming wake behind her that was soon, however, obliterated by the racing waves.

It had just gone eight bells, and shortly after, Colin, whose watch it was below, heard the order given,

“Hands shorten sail!”

There was the usual rattling of feet across the deck, as the men scurried along and chased each other into the rigging.

But hardly three minutes elapsed ere a cry arose that startled every one in the ship, fore and aft,

“Man overboard!”

Colin rushed on deck. The ship was being hove to, the life-buoy had already been lighted and let go. He was just in time to see a tall figure with long hair floating out on the breeze stand for a moment on the bulwarks, between him and the sky, then plunge downwards into the sea.

It was Mildmay; the tall and stately figure with the long, long hair would have told Colin that, but yonder also lay the coat, thrown, as it had been, hurriedly over the hatchway; the coat with its two rows of gold lace and one of gold braid, which distinction the lieutenant's seniority entitled him to.

Colin strained his eyes and gazed after him. How rapidly he seemed to swim! Yet this was more apparent than real, for the ship had not yet quite lost her way, and was drifting to the westward and south.

And all that Colin could see was one little dark spot

in the midst of the pathway made by the moonbeams, hidden every now and then in the bars of shade, and anon appearing again on the crests of the heaving waves.

To the right of this moonlit path burns one solitary star on the breast of the sea. That is the light from the life-buoy.

Two boats are called away, and are being lowered into the water with all speed, and yet how interminably long it seems to Colin ere they reach it. But there is the splash of oars at last, and they are off to the relief. One steers directly for the life-buoy—the drowning man may already have reached it; the other follows in the wake of the lieutenant, but he must by this time be fully a quarter of a mile away.

There is silence in the ship now fore and aft, a silence broken only by the occasional flap of a sail or creaking of a block, for both officers and men, if they have to walk, move upon tiptoe, and if they have to speak, do so in whispers.

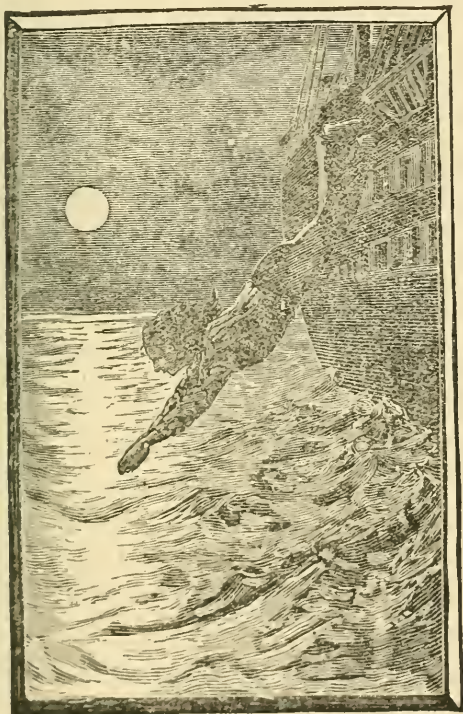
Fifteen minutes have passed; the boats are hardly visible even by the aid of night-glasses, and so far away are they that not a sound comes from them across the water.

But the silence is broken at last, for there reached the ears of those on board one long, wild, despairing cry. Then all is still once more.

But presently the well-known plash of oars can be heard, and soon the boats are alongside. A few minutes

more and they are hoisted on board—the rescued and the rescuer.

Colin could not bear to look upon Mildmay thus, so pale, so drooping, so lifeless. Are they both dead? he wondered, and, wondering, shuddered.



VII.

LIEUTENANT MILDMA Y.

CHAPTER VII.

LIEUTENANT MILDMAV.

THE funeral-bell was tolling on board the *Theodora* next day, and the Service for the Dead, which never sounds more impressive than at sea, was being read in slow and solemn tones by the clergyman: "We commit the body to the deep." At these words the grating on which it lies is tipped, and with sullen plunge the body sinks into the depth of the ocean.

The service is concluded ; then the hands are piped down and go forward or below to their work and duties, but more slowly and more quietly than is their wont at most times. Is it grief for Fred Adams, the young A.B. who has just found rest in a mariner's grave, that keeps them so still ? No ; for few knew him, and only one on board had been "shipmates" with Fred before ; that was a first-class boy. Yonder he is, weeping bitterly beside a gun. Every one respects his grief, but no one attempts to console or comfort him. He will get well ere long. Fred's "traps" will be sold in the ship by auction ; then Fred himself will pass away from the thoughts of all on board. But there may be some little cottage,

some hamlet in England, where a mother or a sister dwells, and in their minds the memory of this humble sailor will be green for ever.

A deeper sorrow than that for the drowned sailor has spread itself over the ship. Lieutenant Mildmay lay in his cot, so weak, so ill, so feeble, that the surgeon could give but little hopes of his life. Many of the crew had been under this officer before, and the way they talked of him to their messmates proved how much they loved and respected him. But even to those who had not sailed with him previously Mr. Mildmay had already endeared himself. They could see he was a strict officer, but a kind-hearted man, a genuine gentleman and sailor.

All that day Mildmay seemed hovering betwixt death and life. He spoke towards evening, but only in a husky whisper. The doctor was with him almost constantly, and whenever he entered the ward-room he was eagerly questioned about the state of his patient, and his replies were listened to, and his very looks as he made them noted by even the mess-servants, and these were speedily reported and commented on in the steerage, the engine-room, on deck, and even in the galley.

The *Thcodora* held on her course, and shortly after passing the Cape de Verdes fell in with the trade winds. One afternoon, about ten days after the fatal accident had taken place, Dr. McGee, the surgeon, called Colin on deck.

"My patient, poor Mildmay," he said, abruptly, "wants to see you."

"Wants to see me?" replied Colin, in some surprise.

"Yes, he wants to see you. Have you known him or sailed with him before?"

"No, never. I never saw Mr. Mildmay until I came on board the *Theodora*."

"Well," said the surgeon, "I may as well tell you that he has been raving somewhat, and it is just possible he mistakes you for some one else. But he is sensible enough at present. You know Mr. Mildmay's cabin? Very well; go to him, but, mind, don't stop a moment longer than you can help, as talking may excite him too much."

"Not," added the surgeon, as if speaking to himself, "that it makes a very great deal of difference."

Colin stopped a moment, then said,—

"Oh, sir, pardon me, but you speak as though there were no hopes of your patient. He has been so kind to me. I hope you do not think he will die."

"Look here, young gentleman," said McGee, brusquely, "I shan't let you go down below there at all unless you can manage to pull a more cheerful face. So there! As to Mildmay's dying or living I can say little. Come, I don't want to talk unkindly to you. You are a terribly nervous chap, but screw up your courage and *look* happy, whether you feel so or not."

The ship was gently swinging to and fro on the waves, but moderately steady withal. Colin paused

before Mildmay's curtained door, but at that moment the ship gave an extra roll to windward, and the drapery swung aside and revealed his presence.

"Come in, McLeod," said a faint voice.

Mildmay lay in his cot with his long grey hair floating back over the snowy pillows, and with his hands clasped and lying outside the coverlet. It was an easy, even happy attitude. He moved his face towards Colin and smiled; then he beckoned him to a chair close by the cot, so situated that the two were face to face. There was a hectic flush on each of Mildmay's cheek-bones, and his eyes were more sparkling than usual, otherwise few could have said he was ill.

"Dr. McGee," he said, "is one of the best fellows in the world, and one of the best meaning, but he has got an idea into that old Scotch noddle of his that I am about to lose the number of my mess."

"I'm glad to hear you talk so cheerfully," said Colin, smiling.

"I know you are, boy," said Mildmay. "There is that in your face which tells me you are sincere. Now raise my shoulders a little, and put that extra pillow which you see on the chair yonder under my head. You have no idea how feeble I am!"

The poor lieutenant *was* feeble, and talked very feebly too, with many a pause and catch of the breath.

"May I give you anything, sir?"

"A little wine-and-water. Thank you. Now tell

the sentry to allow no one to come near this cabin-door until you leave."

Colin did as he was told, and returned as quickly and as quietly as he could.

Mildmay seemed to have fallen asleep, but so still did he lie, and so inaudible was his breathing, that Colin after a short time grew alarmed, and laid his hand on the lieutenant's wrist. How cold and clammy it felt ! But Mildmay opened his eyes at once.

"I was thinking," he said, "I was away back again in the distant past. Colin McLeod, it is a long, long time since I was a boy like yourself, but still it seems but like a dream of yesterday."

Colin made no reply, and after a short pause Mr. Mildmay went on.

"Now," he said, with that sad smile of his, "disabuse your mind of the notion that I am never going to leave this cot alive, because I know and I *feel* that I shall be on duty again long before we are at the Cape. But there is always a chance of a sick man taking a turn for the worse, so on that account I have made up my mind to tell you something which otherwise you would probably never have known. What I am about to tell you is the romance of my own life. I tell it to you, Colin, because I knew your uncle."

"My uncle, sir ? My uncle, Captain Peter ?"

"Your uncle, Captain Peter. One of the best and bravest men that ever trod on a quarterdeck."

"You know him, then, sir ?"

"Know him? Ay, ay, I know him, and knew him long before Colin McLeod was born. I served with him when I was only a mite of a middy. That was in times of peace; and I served with him when a junior lieutenant, he being my captain. That was in the stirring days of the Crimean war, Colin. I was very young then, but even the rattle of the drum or the bugle that now summons us to quarters fires my blood. I have but to close my eyes for a moment, and the old days come back again."

"You love war, then, sir?"

"Not for itself, Colin McLeod, not even for the excitement of battle, not for the blood and the carnage, but for the virtues it causes to shine forth in the breast of every man who is a man. Ah! Colin, war is a great leveller, it fills up the valleys and it brings the mountains low."

"I must not keep you talking, sir."

"Colin McLeod, our good surgeon, McGee, put that notion in your head. 'Don't excite old Mildmay,' he said; but I brought you here to talk to you, and I mean to do so as much as I please, in spite of our worthy medico, who seems not to know that to lie and think the thoughts one cannot speak is far more exciting and debilitating than talking can possibly be."

"It is sad to think of the slain in war," said Colin.

"Oh, boy, yes; but this world is full of pain and

sorrow ; pain in peace as well as pain in war. What says the goodly Bishop Porteous ?

“ ‘ War its thousands slays,
But Peace its thousands ten.’ ”

Mr. Mildmay paused for a moment, then recommenced abruptly.

“ Did your good uncle never tell you of the fierce fight in which he lost his leg ? ”

“ Long, long ago,” replied Colin, “ I remember his describing something of it to my mother ; and now, strange to say, sir, it begins to dawn upon me that he must have mentioned your name more than once, though I took little notice. You were nothing to me then, sir.”

Mildmay seemed intensely pleased, for he put out his hand and pressed Colin’s.

“ What you have told me,” he said, “ is better far than anything our surgeon has given me since I have been laid low. No, your uncle was never a man to boast, but a braver deed has seldom if ever been done—a braver action never fought at sea—than the capture and defeat of those two Russian ships-of-war by the old *Bellona*, commanded by your gallant Uncle Peter. We were coasting along the shores of the Black Sea, in company with a French frigate, when on rounding a point we came suddenly in sight of two monster Russians, bearing down upon us with all sail set. We beat to quarters at once—we were always ready—and

so also did the Frenchman, and in less than fifteen minutes the first shot was fired. It seemed to be an understood thing betwixt the foe and us that we should fight ship to ship. But, both in guns and tonnage, to say nothing of men, those Russians were twice as powerful as we were.

"Your uncle, Colin McLeod, appeared to think we were too near the shore for a free fight, so we stood out to sea, the Russians following with precisely the same sails that we carried. They wanted to test their sailing power as against our own. In this respect, too—much, no doubt, to their own satisfaction—they proved our superiors.

"But," continued the lieutenant, leaning now on his elbow, as if the subject had given him fresh strength, "there was one thing in which the foe was not our superior—in the prowess of her men; they possessed not the indomitable courage and cool skill of ours. Ah, boy! whenever you hear or read of foreign powers counting or reckoning up our naval strength by the number of ships and guns in our dockyards, just smile to yourself, for ten to one they will forget that every man in our fleet is a sailor born and bred, with the blood of the ancient Vikings in his veins, and descended from a race that has been mistress of the seas for hundreds of years."

"But the battle, sir," said Colin, who was not unmindful of the surgeon's warning. "How did it end?"

"As battles 'twixt the Briton and the Russ always did end," said Mr. Mildmay. "It was a fierce and terrible fight, though. Alas for the poor Frenchman! the struggle had not lasted more than half an hour before, high over the thunder of our own guns and those of the enemy we were engaging, rose the roar of a terrible explosion, an immense canopy of smoke and flames filled the air, mingled with masses of splintered masts and timbers. The Frenchman had sunk, and to the assistance of the poor men who floated around the spot where she had gone down the dastardly enemy never sent a single boat. She began to bear down on us, however, though crippled in her bowsprit and with her foremast gone by the board.

"Your uncle saw his chance, and although his sails were riddled with shot and his rigging cut about, his spars and yardarms were almost intact. With one parting volley at the ship he had been fighting he ran down to meet the other. The old *Bellona* seemed that day to sail like a witch.

"'We'll rake her!' cried your uncle to his first lieutenant; 'then stand by to lower boats and pick up our French friends.'

"The enemy saw the manœuvre, but was in too crippled a condition to prevent its complete success. We poured our whole broadside into her stern as we swept past. The wind caught the smoke and revealed her upper decks immediately after. It was a sickening sight. The other mast tottered and fell, the wheel was

blown to atoms, and bridge and boats were in splinters. The Frenchman was avenged.

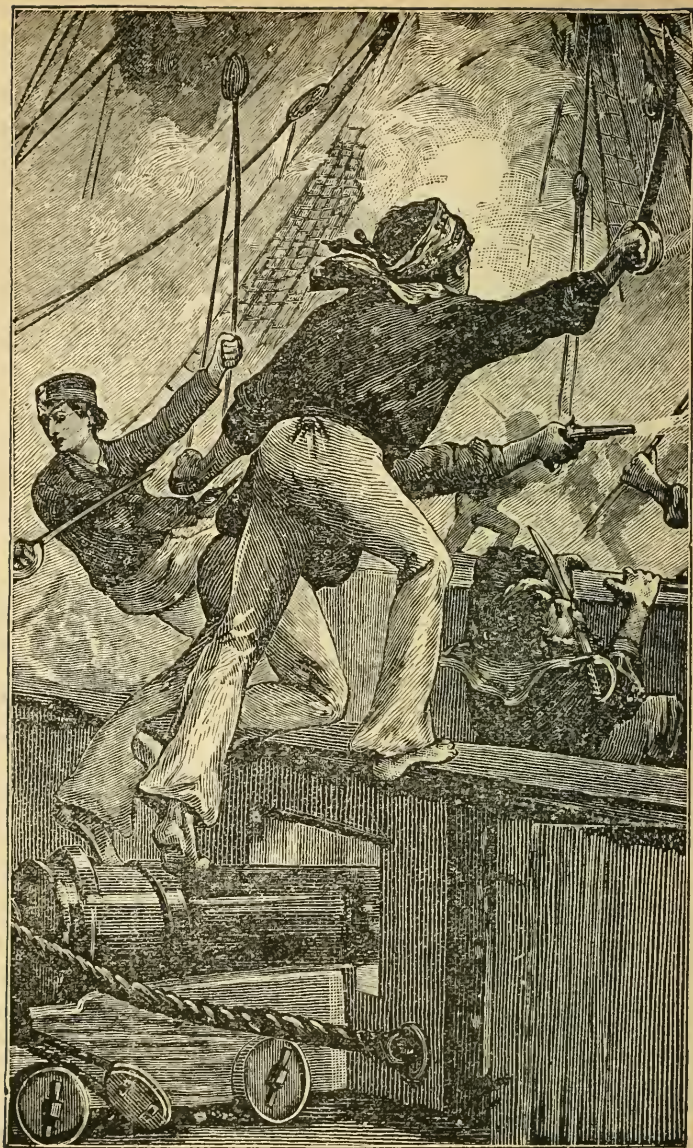
“Before the other Russian could get near us we had picked up nearly thirty of our friends, and had the boats hoisted inboard again. Then the battle recommenced 'twixt ship and ship, for the crippled Russian made straight for the beach in a sinking condition, leaving her sister ship to give a good account of us if she could. Had your uncle, Colin, commanded that great line-of-battle ship, with her armament and powers of sailing, instead of the smaller and more slow *Bellona*, the fight would not have lasted so long as it did.

“Quick as she was, and well manned, the enemy failed in every attempt to rake our craft; then she lay broadside on to us, and the force of her fire was terrific. We soon had several of our guns rendered useless, and had hardly men enough left to man the rest. Our crowning disaster, however, was when our maintopmast was splintered by a shot, and came slowly crashing down.

“Almost at the same moment, Colin, a shot tore through your poor brave uncle's leg, and he fell on the bridge. Rayson, the first lieutenant, and the surgeon himself, were by his side in a moment, and would have had him carried below.

“‘Tourniquet, doctor, tourniquet!’ was all he muttered; but the instrument was speedily applied, and the bleeding stopped.

“‘Rayson,’ he cried, hurriedly, gasping out the words,



"WE CHEERED AS WE CLAMBERED ON BOARD."

[Page 103.]

‘run us alongside ! Board her, cutlass in hand, in the good old fashion ; it is our only chance !’

‘One last broadside was fired, then, to the surprise of the Russians—who now looked upon us as a prize, and who were shouting with joy and mad with glee—the *Bellona* forged ahead right down on them. It was man to man then, Colin, and British cutlass to Russian pike and pistol.

“I boarded at the bows, and with my fellows around me fought aft towards the waist of the ship. We cheered as we clambered on board in spite of the fierce resistance we met, but once on that blood-drenched deck there was no more cheering, but instead only the clashing of steel, the ring, ring, ringing of pistols, and then—why then it was all over ; the foe in their hurry to escape had even torn up the gratings off the hatches and thrown themselves below pell-mell.

“We were victors, Colin.”

“And my uncle ?”

“He had never left the bridge, although the surgeon tried to force him below. I was the first to return to him. ‘I feel the pain now,’ he said, ‘but we are victorious, this is a glorious hour!’

“The brave man spoke no more for days. I took charge of the captured man-o’-war, and we made sail for Scutari.

“About the third day—for we were detained by boisterous head winds—our look-out reported land on the lee bow.

"It was no land, but a bank of dense fog, and hardly were we into it ere it blew almost a hurricane, and we were laid on our beam ends. We righted, but with the loss of a spar that had been splintered in the engagement and afterwards spliced.

"We never saw the *Bellona* again. But alas for the fortunes of war! next morning we fell in with a Russian frigate. It is needless to say that we became an easy prey to her; we had not men enough to fight even a gunboat. I was a prisoner of war."

Lieutenant Mildmay stopped speaking, and lay back on the pillows.

"You are exhausted, sir," said Colin.

He pressed Colin's hand again, then closed his eyes again as if resting.

"I was a prisoner of war," he said again presently. "And now, dear boy, comes my own little romance. Every life, Colin, has its romance. I've had mine. It was a dream while it lasted, but it has gone, and it can never return. I must be brief, for I fain would sleep."

"Some other time, sir, perhaps."

Lieutenant Mildmay seemed to start.

"No, boy, no," he said, "there is no time like the present.

"I was marched a prisoner of war into the interior. I shall not tell you of the sufferings I endured on the road, suffice it to say that after a long and weary journey of over a week we found ourselves, I and my

men—or the few of them that had not been killed by the way——”

“Killed!”

“Ay, boy, killed by their brutal escort. We found ourselves in a lovely little village that nestled among trees near a wide and beautiful lake. There was here a small fort or castle, and the commandant visited us.

“He was not only civil, he was even kind. I hesitated to give my parole, but he pleaded with me to do so. If I did he told me I might go where I liked, and be his guest frequently, and my life would be as happy as it was possible to make that of a prisoner of war.

“I took his advice, and was, comparatively speaking, free. I was billeted at the most charming cottage in all the village. ‘They are foreigners like yourself,’ said the commandant, who talked excellent English, ‘and with them you are sure to be comfortable.’

“The cottage stood on an eminence embowered in trees and covered with creepers that trailed around gables, porch, and verandah. There was a green lawn sloping down to the lake where a little boat lay moored, and all around the house were acres on acres of rose-trees, the perfume from which on this sweet summer’s evening was delightful in the extreme. As the commandant and I walked together up the gravel pathway the sound of music—a girlish voice singing to a harp—came through the open window and fell on my ear.

“I looked towards my companion.

“‘It is Annetta,’ he said, ‘little Annetta. You will

like her. But don't fall in love, you know,' he added, smiling.

" 'I don't think it is likely,' I replied, with a light laugh.

" How little I knew what was before me !'

VIII.

THE ROMANCE OF A LIFE.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ROMANCE OF A LIFE.

"YOUR uncle, Colin McLeod," continued Mr. Mildmay, "was a favourite with every one and everywhere. It is hardly too much to say that the men in his ship all but worshipped him, while his officers not only respected their captain, but were proud of him. The admiral of the fleet had said more than once he could trust Captain Peter and his bold *Bellona* to do anything, and, strange though it may seem, the Admiralty at home were satisfied with all he did. This is really strange, because Admiralties are seldom or never satisfied with any officer, and even when they are they do not often take the trouble to say so.

"You may be sure we had plenty of fighting while we belonged to the old *Bellona*, both in her and out of her, both afloat and ashore.

"Captain Peter prided himself on the proficiency in drill which his crew had attained. 'They are not only fine sailors,' he would say, 'but they are jolly good soldiers. Can't be beaten, in fact.'

"I remember your uncle making use of these very words to a small, intensely respectable-looking agri-

cultural baronet, that, with his wife and family, we had saved from the Russians; we had rescued them from a sinking yacht.

“‘Splendid soldiers they are, sir!’ said Captain Peter. ‘Now,’ he added, ‘I am going on shore to-morrow morning at daybreak. You can rise early, I dare say, sir?’

“‘Oh, yes,’ was the reply; ‘at any hour almost.’

“‘Good!’ said the honest captain. ‘I’m going to capture a small fort in here. You shall go with us, Sir George. It will be a treat for you, and you will then see what kind of soldiers the sailors of the *Bellona* are.’

“‘Me go with you!’ cried Sir George, forgetting his grammar in his excitement.

“The old *Bellona* was engaged on special service. She wasn’t a very fast sailer, but it is wonderful, after all, what we did with her. We were here, there, and everywhere, one day acting as convoy to a fleet of our own merchantmen—for there were pirates in those days in the Levant—next fighting a Russian frigate, and next probably on shore storming a fort.

“Those were stirring times, I can tell you, and some of the scrapes your uncle got into would have been both sad and serious had it not been that he invariably managed to get out of them all in the neatest manner imaginable. Yes, we had lots of fighting, and—although we never complained—short commons. Very often we had nothing for dinner but weevily biscuits, and what we left was fried in a little dripping for supper. The

excitement carried us through, but we were all pretty war-worn.

“War-worn, but not weary. Not a bit of it! Only with the exception of the cook, who, the men said, kept up the rotundity of his person by licking the soup-ladle, there wasn’t a single ounce of spare fat on any of us, from the captain to the cabin-boy. We looked positively gaunt, with semi-sunken eyes, brown skins, and high cheekbones. But our muscles were steel, our sinews like strips of machinery belts.

“At the time, then, that the Russian prize was retaken and I and my poor fellows made prisoners, I was what you athletes would call in fine form, but rather under weight. The long journey inland and my sufferings by the way—for our escort was a sergeant fellow and a troop of irregular, *very* irregular, cavalry, none of whom understood a word of English—did not tend to improve my condition. You may fancy, then, how glad I was to find myself once more under a hospitable roof. And my mind was all the more easy in that the commandant of the fort had not only promised to look well after the comforts of my men, but to endeavour to effect an exchange of prisoners at as early a date as he could.

“‘You look, though,’ he added, kindly, ‘as if you really needed a rest, and a few months among our bracing hills will make another man of you.’

“There is never any good growling, Colin, though sailors are—so they say—seldom perfectly pleased with

anything under the sun, so I soon settled down to my new life, and I came in time to love it. I almost wondered how I could have been enamoured with the excitement of the existence I had previously to this been leading. The country all around the lake was exceedingly beautiful, and as wild and romantic, Colin, as any of your own Scottish glens.

"But, Colin McLeod, I may as well tell you now, although you are far too young to understand me, I fell in love with the daughter of my kind-hearted hostess, the lovely and accomplished Ana Loréna, and, sailor-like, I fear I did so from the very first moment I saw her. The commandant and I came upon her and her mother, the Señora Loréna, quite unawares. In fact, the Russian officer stalked quietly up to the casement window smoking his cigarette, and I followed. Annetta, as he called her, did not perceive me, for I was hidden by the roses that clustered around the verandah; so she merely gave one upward glance at the commandant, and a smile so sweet I had never seen on a face before—and went on with her song, a very tender one, a very plaintive one, called 'Juanita.'"

"I know it," said Colin.

"Then some day you must sing it to me. It will restore to me for a time the feelings of days long gone by, of days that were to me the happiest in all my existence. The name Loréna will strike you as being a Spanish one. My hostess was of Spanish extraction, but theirs was a very sad story. They came, or rather

they had been brought, from Lima, in South America. You have never been there yet, but I have, and fain would be there again. But something tells me that I shall not live to visit that fair city any more, and this is my chief reason for confiding to you the history of the romance of my life.

“Lima is to my thinking the most charming city in the world ; the scenery all about it is an earthly paradise. Alas that it should be the scene of so much dissension and strife and periodical outbursts of war and rebellion !

“Señor Loréna had lived long in this city, and had amassed wealth, but, tired at last of the continual excitement, he determined, with his wife and only daughter—only child, in fact—Ana, to take passage to England, and there end his days in peace and quiet.

“He changed most of his bills and coupons for specie, with which he embarked in a small brig hailing from Glasgow, which he had chartered to take him to Europe, and the voyage was commenced. Little did he know then that war had broken out betwixt England and Russia. To his sorrow he knew but too soon.

“But the first part of the voyage south was all peace and pleasure ; the weather and the winds were favourable. They were in the trades. The brig sailed well, and there was every prospect of a prosperous and happy voyage. One day, however, when off the wild, barren shores of Bolivia, with the land in sight and every stitch of canvas set, a large, long, raking vessel hove in sight round the point. She, too, was under

sail, and from her appearance would draw at least double the water the brig did. The captain did not like her looks, and, with all his wealth on board, Señor Loréna was exceedingly nervous.

“As the large ship altered her course and bore down towards them, and as presently a ball of smoke rose up from her bows, and a shot tore past the brig’s stern, they concluded she was a pirate. To fight was out of the question. Their safety lay in getting well in shore, where the other vessel could not follow them. So the brig was kept away, and two men put in the chains, lest she might run suddenly on shore. It was a strange race—a race for safety—a race for life itself.

“As the wind blew directly towards the shore, the sea broke in great rollers with all the force of the wide Pacific right upon the long low sandy beach. To ground anywhere among these would be fatal. They had the satisfaction at last, however, of seeing the great ship lie-to. She would not venture farther, and presently the brig herself cast anchor. It would soon be night, and as there was no moon, they hoped to slip away in the darkness.

“Several shots were fired by the enemy, who now displayed the Russian flag, but every shot fell short. Much to the consternation of those in the brig, boats were now seen to be lowered, no less than four of them, and were soon swiftly speeding over the water towards the brig.

“‘Let us fight!’ cried Loréna.

“‘That we will,’ said McGregor, the captain. ‘My brig shall never be taken by boats as long as I have a shot in the locker.’

“So the crew were armed, and the only guns on board—two brass six-pounders—were loaded and run out.

“Nearer and nearer came the armed boats.

“McGregor hailed them in English.

“‘Stand off,’ he cried, ‘or we’ll blow you out of the water.’

“The reply was a hailstorm of bullets from the small arms of those in the boats.

“‘Give it ’em now!’ roared McGregor, as the boats still advanced.

“The brig’s guns were loaded with pieces of old iron, terribly bad for the guns, Colin. But it was terribly bad for the first of those boats as well. McGregor himself laid and fired the piece, and the result was appalling. The Russian boat was literally blown to sticks, and half her crew killed or drowned.

“‘Stand off, now!’ shouted the bold skipper, ‘if you don’t want another dose of the same drug.’

“‘They are Russians, sir,’ he continued, addressing Señor Loréna; ‘but if they think they are going to have an easy job capturing my brig they are mistaken,’

“‘Is England, then, at war with Russia?’ asked Loréna, anxiously.

“‘I fear so, sir,’ was the reply. ‘Indeed, it seems like it, and war was threatened ever before I left home.’

"But the Russian boats had had enough; they returned on board with their wounded. In half an hour they were back, and a kind of artillery duel commenced, the boats fighting with rockets and shells, the brig with her iron shrapnel.

"It was a most unequal fight, and ended, as it only could end, in a victory for the Russians. For in half an hour smoke was seen coming spewing up the fore-hatch—the brig was on fire! McGregor was a determined fellow, however. He got up sail and beached his burning brig, then took to the boats with his passengers and all hands, concluding he would rather brave the breakers, and land on an inhospitable shore, than trust himself to the tender mercies of the enemy.

"But fate had willed it otherwise. They were pursued and made prisoners, and in a very short time found themselves on board the Russian corvette. The brig was left to smoulder. Loréna was a poorer man now; nearly all his wealth, all his specie, was left in the burning vessel, which blew up and disappeared, every timber of her seeming to be scattered to the four winds of heaven..

"The rest of Loréna's story is soon told. The Russian ship was homeward bound, and in two months' time the unfortunate family found themselves in the very village to which I was led a prisoner of war. They, however, were told they were free.

"Loréna was not destitute; he still had boards to sell, and might have gone to England and settled down in ease, though not in affluence; but his wife and

daughter were enamoured of the quiet beauty of the scenery in which they now found themselves, and so they stayed in the village. They took a small farm—a rose farm—and at the time I made the acquaintance of the Señora and her daughter the father had been dead about a year; the new life had not suited him, who had been accustomed all his days to bustle and to business.

“Colin, I loved little Ana Loréna, as I have already said, from the very day I first entered her presence. But it was not till six long months after that I dared to tell her so.

“I had been out on the lake shooting wild birds; it was winter, and the ice covered the whole surface of the loch, and ducks, geese, and even black swans were abundant. In my hurry to get one of the latter, which was only wounded, I fell. Some snow got into one barrel of my gun, and when I next fired it burst. One large piece struck me on the left arm, severing an artery and making a terrible wound.

“When I recovered consciousness I was at home in the little cottage, and both Ana and her mother were tending me. I need not describe my long illness further than to say it was to me one of the sweetest periods of my chequered career, for I soon knew that Ana loved me even as I loved her. We were married in the ensuing spring in this village of roses. Ah, Colin! life seemed all roses to me then. But my happiness was of brief duration, for in less than six weeks came the order for my exchange.”

The lieutenant suddenly ceased talking, and his eyes had a far-away, dreamy, even mournful, look in them when he shortly afterwards resumed his narrative.

“Go I must, and leave all I now held dear! My duty called me. Duty! I had ever looked upon it as a sacred thing, but with its sacredness there now appeared to me to be mingled something of the awful. Duty and destiny were beckoning me away. Obedience must be mine.

“Then hope came to our aid and solace. It told a too flattering tale, and for more than a week before our parting Ana and I talked about nothing else save the happiness in store for us when we should once again be reunited, never to have to say ‘Farewell’ any more as long as life lasted.

“On my arrival at home, or shortly after, I was appointed to a ship for service on the eastern shores of Africa. It was what sailors call ‘the tail end of a commission,’ so I had not to be away for more than a year.

“Never a year of all my life, Colin, passed more slowly to me than that did, yet peace was proclaimed at last, and we were ordered back to England.

“But letters during the previous two months I had had none, either from my wife or her mother.

“As soon as I arrived at Portsmouth I asked for and obtained six months’ leave of absence on half-pay, and you may be sure I shipped at once for the Black Sea.

I hired a rude kind of drosky, drawn by two fleet horses, and in three days' time I had arrived at the village by the lake.

"What a scene of desolation met my gaze! The beautiful hills, once covered with roses, were black and bleak and bare, the fort was in ruins, and every house in this once smiling hamlet was wrecked and roofless.

"From a half-wild Russian peasant who was toiling in a field some distance off I learned that before the war closed a Turkish raid had been made on the village, and every living being who had not previously fled was put to the sword.

" 'The commandant of the fort,' I inquired; 'was he slain?'

" 'Oh no, sir,' was the reply; 'he went off to a town inland a week before.'

" 'Did he go alone?' I asked, trembling.

" 'Let me see,' said the mudjik, laying down his rude turnover spade.

"All my hopes hung on his answer. 'Can't you remember?' I asked.

" 'To be sure, to be sure!' said the fellow. 'Why, I went with him, and there was my wife, and——'

" 'Stay!' I cried, holding out a gold piece; 'this is for you. Tell me now, did any foreigners go as well?'

" 'To be sure, to be sure! The Lorénas went—the old lady, the young lady, and the baby.'

"Colin, I could have hugged that rough mudjik to my heart for the information he gave me.

"He went with me to the town whither the dear ones had gone for safety. They were not there, nor was the commandant; he, I afterwards found, had joined his regiment and was reported killed.

"I cannot think to this day of all my weary wanderings in search of her I was doomed never to see again, and in search of my dear mother-in-law and my child, without feelings that quite overcome me.

"At long last I got a clue; I found out a portion of the truth. My wife was drowned in crossing a frozen river, and her mother was left, by Heaven's mercy, to nurse and tend my child. But why had they not written to me? Where lay the mystery? It has been a mystery to me now for fifteen long years, and it was only cleared up a few days after I was appointed to this ship—a mystery, Colin, that has wrinkled my brows and whitened my hairs, and made me an old man before my time.

"Here," he continued, pulling a letter from under his pillow, "is the explanation, and a very simple one it is.

"This letter is from the commandant of the village fort; it tells me of my wife's death, it tells me that she believed *me* dead, that no letters arrived at the village for months before the Turkish raid, and that he, the commandant, had since found out they had been laid aside by Russian officials because they were English,

and *happened to be over weight!* * It was only lately, continues the commandant, that he discovered I was still alive. But the concluding part of the letter is the most important, for it informs me that my child—my daughter—is now living in Lima with her grandmother.

“Colin McLeod, a sick man has many strange fancies, and I have at this moment a presentiment that I may never see Lima. If I should not, you must seek out the dear ones and tell them what I have told you. You promise?”

“I promise, sir; but——”

“Nay, nay; say no more. Here are some other papers; they may or they may not prove of service.”

“What are they, sir?” asked Colin.

“They are sketches, and maps, and plans of the very spot where the brig in which Señor Loréna embarked at Lima was beached and destroyed, and where all his specie lies buried in the sand. Take them and copy them; do the work here in my cabin, where I trust often to find you. Having done so, keep the copies under lock and key, and return the originals to my desk.”

“And you really think, sir, that——”

“I think nothing, Colin. Only mark this—these sketches were taken by Señor Loréna from the port of the cabin of the Russian corvette that made him prisoner. He, my father-in-law, must have thought

* Founded on fact.

there was a possibility of one day recovering his buried treasure.

"Go now, boy. Come to me again to-morrow, I feel tired now and would sleep."

He held out his hand to Colin as he spoke; Colin pressed it, and silently drew aside the door-curtain and retired. He did not go on deck again, but forward on the main deck, where he could walk about and ponder and think upon all he had heard.

He felt singularly interested in this kind-hearted lieutenant, who talked in such a fatherly way to him. He felt drawn towards him—felt he was really beginning to love him.

Colin met the doctor next morning coming aft from the sick-bay, and inquired about his patient.

"Getting on wonderfully well," was the reply. "A great change for the better since yesterday. He has had a critical sleep."

Colin was greatly relieved.

It was indeed a critical sleep that Mildmay had enjoyed. His mind had been in some measure relieved from having told Colin his story, and nature had commenced the healing process immediately.

When Colin was sent for that forenoon to Mr. Mildmay's cabin he found his friend sitting up in his cot, calm and quiet and cheerful.

"Come along, young man," said Mildmay; "I want to see you begin to make those sketches 'right away, as the Yankees say. Sit down."

IX.

IN TOWARDS THE WEST LAND—A STRANGE SAIL.

CHAPTER IX.

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“**I** HEAR,” said Lieutenant Mildmay to Colin one day, “that our good captain is still ailing.”

“Yes, sir,” replied Colin, “he has caught cold, I believe, or something of the kind.”

“Call it by the right name, boy ; put it in French if you like—*mal de mer*.”

“But it seems so strange to me, sir, that so old a man as Captain Blunderbore, and so old a sailor——”

“Stay, Colin. You must take care how you use the word ‘old,’ except as a term of endearment.”

Colin laughed pleasantly. “Indeed, if I may speak plainly,” he said, “there is nothing particularly endearing about Captain Blunderbore ; at all events he hasn’t evinced any very lovable disposition as yet. But, sir, he must be over fifty.”

“Not quite, perhaps, and he hasn’t roughed it in the service either, as I and your dear old uncle have. That accounts for the *mal de mer*, Colin.”

“And why, sir,” asked Colin, “hasn’t he roughed it?”

“Too many friends at home, Colin ; too many friends in high places ; too many molly-coddles to give

him the best ships, that never go twenty miles out of sight of land—ships with well-found messes, large cabins, and feather beds.”

“Well, a life in ships like these,” said Colin, “must be merely playing at being sailors.”

“Ah! yes, lad, true, and that is one thing your uncle wished you to avoid. ‘Colin must rough it, Mildmay,’ he writes, in one of his pithy letters. ‘There is the stuff in him to make a good officer if it be only properly worked.’ But sit down, boy, and do a bit of work. You can bring your friend Quentin to my cabin also any time I am not here.”

“That is very kind of you,” replied Colin; “but, dear Mr. Mildmay, this doesn’t mean roughing it, and I think my uncle would just be as well pleased if I were to do my work on top of my sea-chest, or in my own mess-place.”

“True, he might, but I don’t think I’ll spoil you for all that. Ha!” he continued, “you have no idea what a tartar I am in the way of discipline. Duty is a most sacred thing, Colin, and if ever I found you fail in it I would bring you up sharp with a round turn, as the sailors say. Now, what are you going to do?”

“Well, sir, I have copied one of these letters. Now I am going to continue my letters home.”

“Continue them? Explain.”

“I write a bit about every second or third day to my father, and mother, and brother. And also one to the old dominie, and one to our old servant Raoul.”

Lieutenant Mildmay's eyes sparkled. He looked admiringly at Colin.

"I'm glad you don't forget home," he said. "And tell me, will your old dominie, Clayton I think you call him, be pleased to get your letter?"

"Oh! delighted; he will carry it in his pocket till it is all frayed at the folds, and read it to everybody he can get to listen. He will read it to the scholars too, and a great many are still there that know me."

"Good," said Mildmay. "What a delightful thing it is to have a home, and to be loved! Now go and write. Hullo, though, what is that!"

"I'll run and see, sir."

It was a shout on deck. A vessel had been sighted, and Colin came back to Mildmay's cabin and reported the circumstance.

Now there is nothing very wonderful in sighting a ship at sea. But in this case there was some little interest attached to the affair from the fact that the *Theodora* was out of the usual track of vessels. She had been steering in pretty closely towards the western shores of Africa. For rumours had reached the Admiralty at home that the slave trade, so well kept down in the Indian Ocean, had broken out here. The Portuguese are not above running a profitable cargo when they have a chance, nor are the Spaniards either.

More sail was clapped on the *Theodora*, and she was kept away a few points so as to steer in the direction of the strange sail, which, curious enough, seemed

wishful to steer off in quite a suspicious way, and give the war-ship a wide berth.

There was a good deal of bustle on deck, and some small show of excitement when Colin went up again.

Benbow and the doctor were walking up and down the quarter-deck ; even D'Austin had come up, and had his pale face and aristocratic nose over the bow in the direction of the chase, for chase she now appeared to be.

Captain Blunderbore sent for his second lieutenant.

"Good-evening, Captain Blunderbore," said that gentleman, coming down off the bridge and tripping up to his commander.

"Ah ! good-evening," replied the captain, returning the salute ; "so we're in chase, are we ?"

"Well, sir," began Gayly, "when anything runs away I think it is our duty to—er——"

"To run after it, Mr. Gayly ; most certainly. And what do you make of her ?"

"Well, sir, it is getting dark now, and we won't see much of her, I fear. At present she is a bit of a mystery. You see, sir, she is running clean away from us, or trying to ; now what does she want to run away for, I ask, if she has, morally speaking, a clean bill of health ?"

"True, Mr. Gayly, true, sir."

"So I've given the orders to get up steam, and we'll try if we can't overhaul her."

"Quite right. But she'll be sure to extinguish her lights when it gets very dark, won't she ?"

"I fear so, sir—I fear so."

And as he spoke little Gayly stood before the captain with his left forefinger pressed against the left corner of his mouth, and his left elbow supported by his right hand in a very thoughtful attitude indeed.

A smart wee man was Lieutenant Gayly, I can assure you. About five-and-twenty, fair-haired, heavy in brows when cogitating, fierce in eye, square-shouldered, a waist like a hornet's—they did say that Gayly wore stays—white immaculate gloves, spotless linen, and patent-leather boots upon feet not much bigger than a Chinese lady's.

I don't say that Gayly was not very clever, mind you, and a good strict officer and all that, but he had too much peacock pride about him for a genuine sailor.

"Do everything for the best, Mr. Gayly," said the captain. "Indeed, I know you will. I'm going below now. Keep me posted."

"That I will," replied Gayly, smartly.

Captain Blunderbore made his way to the companion. He met Quentin Steele and Colin coming along the quarter-deck, on the lee side, and stopped to speak to them.

"I hope you like your ship, young gentlemen, and are doing your duty," he said in a half stern, half fatherly tone of voice.

"Oh! she is a splendid craft," said Quentin, with enthusiasm.

"First-class," said Colin.

"Well, lads," replied the captain, pointing away ahead to the light now glimmering across the water from the strange craft, "we're going to get some prize-money for you. Ha! ha! Lucky young rascals. I wish I was young again."

It was a merry little party that evening in the captain's cabin. Benbow was in fine form, and told many of his most miraculous yarns.

Dr. M'Gee, in his own way, was not a whit behind him.

Captain Blunderbore laughed till his eyes ran water, and he had to blow his nose and laugh again; but Benbow never laughed a bit, even when telling the most preposterous stories.

Meanwhile, steam was got up; but about ten o'clock, when Lieutenant Gayly came in to make a report, he had a rather long face.

"Can't get near her, sir," he said.

"She still burns her lights?"

"Yes, sir."

"Strange!" said the captain. "Well, well, just keep on. If you do get near enough, put a shot through her rigging."

"Ay, ay, sir."

It was a lovely night. Though no moon was shining then, the stars were so bright that every mast and sheet and stay was distinctly visible, and the broad wake that the *Theodora* left behind, whitened by the churning screw, and the racing waves sparkling in the stars' light, and far away to windward the strange mysterious sail.

X.

**CAPTURE OF A PORTUGUESE SLAVER—MAKING IT
“COMFORTABLE” FOR THE CREW.**

CHAPTER X.

CAPTURE OF A PORTUGUESE SLAVER—MAKING IT “COMFORTABLE” FOR THE CREW.

NEXT morning broke bright and fair, the sea was all that suits a sailor's fancy, the breeze strong and bracing, and every inch of canvas set.

It was found that steam did not help the *Theodora* along, or was not needed, so fires were banked.

It *was* provoking, though, for yonder was the strange sail—the phantom ship, as she now came to be called—miles and miles away to windward of them. There was no getting up to her.

The excitement on board the *Theodora* now increased rather than abated.

About nine o'clock, and just after divisions, the captain himself came on deck. He called Benbow, and, chaffing him, asked where the fleetness of the *Theodora* had flown to?

“Yonder is the chase,” he said, “and chase she is likely to remain, Benbow. She is walking away from us. She has the heels of us, and she knows it.”

“A wild-geese chase, I should say,” put in M'Gee.

"I don't think," said Lieutenant Gayly, somewhat contemptuously, "that a surgeon has any right to put in his oar, in matters strictly connected with the working and management of the ship. Pills are more in your way, Dr. M'Gee."

"Man," said M'Gee, "I would think now that a few o' those same pills would do *you* good. It would help to take some of that gall out of your blood. There are just ten on the sick-list this morning," he continued, turning round and saluting the captain.

"Thank you, doctor," replied Captain Blunderbore.

But the doctor did not retire immediately. He owed Mr. Gayly one, and he meant to let him have it.

"I think, sir," he said presently to the captain, "it would be the correct thing to put Mr. Gayly on the list."

"On the sick-list?" said the captain. "Why, doctor, what makes you think so? Nothing wrong with my lieutenant, I trust?"

"Indeed, sir, I fear there is."

Gayly was standing with one hand on the bulwark, looking as pleasant as a badger in a soda-tub.

"I fear, sir—indeed I am sure—he is suffering from blood-poisoning."

The captain gazed anxiously towards Gayly, and, thinking he had gone far enough, M'Gee hastened to complete his explanation.

"He laces too tightly, sir. Horrid thing, tight lacing! Gives his liver no play. Drives the bile all through the blood."

Captain Blunderbore laughed, and Benbow joined heartily, and even the man at the wheel, who had heard all, took the liberty of smiling. Gayly grew red, then white, and bit his lips and lowered his brow, but that did not affect M'Gee in the least. That officer simply nodded and smiled to him, lifted his cap to the captain, and retired with his sick-list under his arm.

"Yes," said the captain, resuming his conversation with Benbow, "I want to know where all the *Theodora's* fleetness has flown to."

"That ship," said Benbow, shaking his fist towards her—"well there, I won't use strong language. I think, though," he said, "we might carry more sail."

"Oh, by all means set it, then; only don't tear the sticks out of her."

Benbow and Gayly consulted together. Then orders were given. The boatswain's pipe screamed and bubbled right merrily in the morning air, reefs were shaken out, and an additional fore and aft sail or two clapped on.

The *Theodora* felt it. She seemed to awake and shake herself into newness of life, and in a few minutes it was evident, from even the swirl of the water and the fast retreating foam alongside, that she was moving far more swiftly through the water. The race had commenced in earnest.

Mr. Gayly ordered the log to be heaved. Shortly after Benbow once more advanced to where the captain stood, glass in hand, gazing steadily at the chase.

"She'll do," cried Benbow—"she'll do yet! We're knocking two more knots out of her. I told you she could do it!" and the sailing-master rubbed his hands with glee.

"One thing to me is pretty evident, Mr. Benbow," said Captain Blunderbore: "yonder ship is a clipper, and as long as the wind holds she can beat us; and as the wind will hold for days and days, we'll lose her."

"Think so, sir?"

"Think so! yes. Do you, Mr. Benbow, imagine that if she didn't know her own speed, and guessed at ours, she wouldn't have extinguished her lights last night and tried to give us the slip in the dark?"

"Well, yes; there is something in it."

"But," continued Benbow, "my glass tells me that we are even now gaining on her."

"And mine says nothing of the sort. Come up to the bridge, Mr. Benbow."

"Now, then, what says your glass?"

"Why—why—I declare they are clapping on more sail!"

"Yes; and so we may say good-bye to them."

"But see, sir—see how she yaws! There is something wrong there—something strange going on!"

"Ay, that there is!" said the captain. "The sail doesn't go up quickly. Down it goes again!"

"There is a row yonder, sir, depend upon it."

"Mr. Gayly," cried Captain Blunderbore, "clear away the pivot gun, and get ready to fire!"

The pivot gun was a sixty-pound chaser, a somewhat ancient-looking Mons Meg of a thing that lay forward between the bows, like some huge monster of an antediluvian type waiting for its prey.

She was speedily loaded, and the men stood by to open the bow ports or bulwarks.

"We are gaining on her now," said Benbow; "and it gets more and more evident every moment there is something up on board of her."

"Look! yon was a puff of smoke, as if a pistol had been fired. Another, and still another!"

The strange vessel now appeared but badly managed, and there was no attempt to make more sail.

Presently her sails shivered; then round came the yards. She was aback.

Then a larger puff of smoke rose from about her quarter-deck, and soon after across the water came the quavering roar of a heavy piece of artillery.

"That's mutiny," said Captain Blunderbore. "Civil war on shipboard."

Meanwhile the *Theodora* gained on her hand over hand.

"Fire across her stern, Mr. Gayly."

The thunder of the great gun then rolled forth, the ship shook and reeled, and in a few minutes a balloon of white foam rose twenty yards astern of the chase, telling where the ball had struck the water.

But no visible effect was produced on board the strange sail. She had filled again, and was once more

staggering on her way, with sheets awry and sails that sadly needed trimming.

"Go a little closer next time," said Captain Blunderbore. "A little closer, Mr. Gayly."

"Shall we hit her, sir? Mr. Barclay can do it." Mr. Barclay was the gunner.

"No," replied the captain, smiling, but shaking his head. "We must not hit her; if we can overhaul her without hitting her all the better for everybody."

"Look!" cried Colin, who was also on the bridge. "She has run up colours."

"Can you make them out, Mr. McLeod?" asked the captain. "Your eyes are young."

Colin looked through his glass for a moment.

"It is the Spanish ensign, sir," he replied. "I caught sight of it this moment fairly afloat on the breeze."

"Yes," added Benbow, "that is the flag. Mr. McLeod is quite right, sir."

Once again smoke and fire belched forth from the bows of the *Theodora*, and a shot went crashing through the rigging of the strange barque.

She had evidently imagined that her flag would protect her.

That shot, however, had the desired effect. The barque lay to, and the *Theodora's* boats, four in all, were at once called away.

The captain went in his own gig, Benbow had command of a boat, and Quentin and Colin commanded the others.



•THEY WERE RECEIVED BY THE CAPTAIN OF THE BARQUE HIMSELF." [Page 139

When within a hundred and twenty yards of the barque the *Theodora* was laid to, and away sprang the boats.

They expected no resistance, nor did they find any.

They were received at the side by the captain of the barque himself, a tall, dark, and very ill-favoured man, and with no very good grace either. He saluted Captain Blunderbore; then, speaking quickly and almost fiercely, he demanded to know the reason of the *Theodora's* fire.

He spoke in Spanish, but Mr. Barclay, the gunner, a man who could speak almost any language, was one of the party, and acted as interpreter.

"You fire on *me*, the merchant captain of a friendly power!" cried the skipper of the mysterious barque. "I shall duly enter the occurrence in the log, and the Government of Spain shall demand apology and redress."

"My good fellow," returned Blunderbore, "pray restrain yourself. You showed no flag, and you ran away from us. We are here in these seas to protect British commerce and protect the coast. How do we know what or who you are? Behold, your decks are slippery with blood; several men lie dead and many wounded. What means the mystery?"

"*Sedicion—motin*," murmured the fellow.

"Mutiny," said Barclay.

"We guessed as much, and now you will kindly show your papers, and we will assist you."

"Assistance?" cried the Spanish captain. "We want none. I have already quelled the mutiny."

"We want no assistance," added several other cut-throat-looking fellows who stood near their captain. "The mutineers are now close under hatches."

"Then I'll have some of them up and question them," said Blunderbore. "Benbow, order your fellows to knock the hatches off."

The Spaniard issued some hurried order, and from the poop deck there instantly rushed out over twenty fully-armed men. At the same moment the muzzle of an ugly-looking nine-pounder was lowered over the poop itself.

Benbow and Blunderbore sprang at once back towards the gangway. One word from the latter, and the British marines to the number of fifteen sprang on board.

"Fix bayonets," cried Blunderbore.

The marines obeyed as coolly as if on parade, and brought their rifles to the deck with a ring and a rattle that evidently had an effect upon the Spaniards. But the muzzle of that ugly nine-pounder still covered the men and officers of the *Theodora*.

"Resistance is useless," said Blunderbore, "if you mean to resist; you have not yet done so, nor have we exceeded our duty. Your explanations, however, must be most perfect and complete, or you are our prisoners. No mere merchant ship can show so many armed men. You will please produce your papers."

As the captain spoke the last words a loud crash was heard. A hatch had been burst open, and a tall gigantic negro sprang up and leapt on deck. The blood was streaming from a recent wound in his brow.

He looked a fearful apparition ; his black, almost naked form, on which the usual scars were visible on the chest, his powerful limbs and fierce eyes, and the determined attitude he assumed, made him indeed a formidable subject.

His appearance was the signal for the rush forward of the Spaniards. The marines' bayonets were at once levelled, and the foreigners staggered back again, scowling defiance as they went.

"They lie," cried the negro, in English—"they lie! Gentlemen of the British Navy, they lie. I'se one Krooman. I hab served in de Navy. Dese men are not Spanish. Dey are Portugee. Dis is a Portugee ship. Ship am full, gentlemen, full to de hatches of slaves. See for yourselves."

Blunderbore spoke a few words in a low voice. He hardly moved his lips as he did so. Yet the effect was instantaneous.

The marines rushed on the armed crew with one ringing cheer, and in two minutes every man was disarmed, and Blunderbore had declared the barque a British prize.

The sailors and marines cheered once more, and back from the *Theodora* came a triple echo ; and, looking over the bulwarks of the barque, one could see the

British tars clustering on bulwarks and rigging, as they waved their caps and cheered.

The skipper of the slaver became very quiet now, and very humble indeed.

"I confess," he said, "to have been legally captured on the high seas."

"Taken red-handed, tell him, Mr. Barclay," said Captain Blunderbore.

"But," was the bold reply, "I have never drawn sword or levelled rifle against a British officer or man, or resisted, except by words, your attack upon me. I have not therefore forfeited my life, nor the lives of my crew."

"How well he seems to know the law," said Benbow, when this was interpreted.

"No," was the answer from Blunderbore, "you have not forfeited your life to us, but it will be our duty to hand you over to your own countrymen, and by their laws you will be tried for murder."

"Meanwhile, sir," said Benbow, "don't you think these wretched Portuguese fellows should exchange places with their still more wretched captives, who are still under hatches? A little of their own medicine will do them good."

The marines, drawn up there on the maindeck, felt mightily amused and pleased at Benbow's proposal, and they grinned to a man. Benbow was a great favourite with every one on board the *Theodora*. He had so much dash and go in him, so much life, but

withal so much genuine humour, that there was no resisting him.

Captain Blunderbore was somewhat taken aback at this proposal.

"Really, Mr. Benbow. Yes,—that is, no, you know ; at least I must have time to think. This rascally crew must of course be made prisoners."

"And put in irons?" suggested Benbow.

"Well, yes, they resisted in a measure. Irons, though, Mr. Benbow, eh? Irons?"

"Certainly," said Benbow; "irons, sir, by all means."

"No ropes would hold these slippery eels," said Barclay, quietly. "They are all born Davenport Brothers."

"Besides, sir," continued Benbow, "irons are ever so much more wholesome. Dr. M'Gee will tell you that."

"Depends on the climate, gentlemen," said Barclay, shuffling shyly with his feet, as if he felt he was taking considerable liberty in talking thus with his superior officers, without having been invited to join the conversation. "Depends on the climate. In a ship I was in up in the Arctic regions, the captain put a man in irons, and he was left all night in the cockpit. Next morning he was found lying on his back insensible-like, and the irons, sir, were frozen into his ankles. He lost both his feet and died afterwards."

"Died, did he?" said Captain Blunderbore. "Dear me, dear me! Poor fellow, poor fellow! Really

though, the best thing he could have done. Well, Mr. Benbow, as we can't have these scoundrels loose, you know, I think—it must be irons."

"And release the slaves and put them below?"

"Well, I suppose—it—must—be so."

"But," continued good, simple Blunderbore, who really had a kind heart of his own with all his little eccentricities, "make it as comfortable for them as the circumstances will admit of."

"Oh, yes; we'll make it comfortable for them. Just explain that to yonder scowling skipper Barclay, will you?"

Barclay laughed.

"You lubberly [*cochino*] old son of a sea cook," he said, in Spanish, "we're going to make it hot for you! You'll have irons on your legs to keep them cool, and maybe a yard or two of hemp [*cuerdo*] round your neck to wind up with!"

"I hope you're explaining to them, Mr. Barclay," said the captain, "that we do not mean to treat them with hardship, nor impose upon them further restraint than the exigencies of the occasion and the service demand."

"That is just what I'm doing," said Barclay, "and I think I've made it plain to them, sir."

"Now, Mr. Benbow, you can do your duty. Secure your men. The marines shall remain here with you. I shall send the doctor on board and some more men, and—and the irons."

"And the irons, sir?" exclaimed Benbow. "Pray, sir, do not!"

"Eh! What?"

Benbow drew himself up to his full height, which was not a great stretch after all.

"There are irons on board, sir—slave irons," he said, boldly. "Those are good enough for ruffians such as these. What, sir, would we place British man-o'-war irons on the legs of Portuguese slave-traders? Perish the thought, sir! Could we, I ask you, sir, ever afterwards dare to put these same irons on the feet of our own decent blue-jackets? No, sir, the biggest scapegrace of a marine, the veriest bounty-jumper, would blush like a rose, sir, or a slice of beet-root, to don irons that once had graced the ankles of a base and cowardly dealer in human flesh."

There was a murmur of applause from the marines, and one of them, Davis by name, a fellow who was never sober when he had a chance of being the reverse, and who boasted that he had been thrice flogged in ten years, was heard to mutter,—

"Blowed if ever I'd care to wear those irons again!"

"Well, well, well," said Blunderbore, "have your own way, Mr. Benbow. But, bless my heart, what a capital actor you'd have made."

And off went the captain in his boat.



XI.

*A TRIP TO SIERRA LEONE—A “HIGH OLD TIME OF
IT” ON SHORE.*

CHAPTER XI.

A TRIP TO SIERRA LEONE—A "HIGH OLD TIME OF IT" ON SHORE.

"THERE is nothing certain in this world," said a wise man once, "except the unforeseen."

"There is nothing impossible or improbable at sea," said the greatest sailor-warrior that ever sailed the ocean.

And yet, when on that same evening Colin McLeod came on board his own ship, and, going to his friend Mildmay's cabin, informed him that there was found among the wounded an Arab of the name of Golava, who knew Mildmay, and had expressed a wish to see him, that officer sat right up in his cot, and opened his eyes much wider than he had done since the *Theodora* left old England.

"Golava here!" he exclaimed. "There was mutiny of some kind on board, I've been told. I hope Golava fought with and not against the slaves and Kroomen. But I need hardly ask; he was ever faithful to British interests."

"He fought on the side of the mutineers, sir," said Colin—"if indeed you can call men mutineers who

fight as slaves for the freedom which I believe is the birthright of all."

"Well spoken, boy—well spoken! But this Golava, he was our interpreter in the old *Spartan*, and a capital fellow he was, and doubtless is. Has he come on board with you?"

"He is outside."

"Bring him in. But stay. Where is Captain Blunderbore?"

"On the main deck, sir. He is talking to Dr. M'Gee."

"Stand near them and wait till they have finished, then present my compliments, and say I should like to speak with Captain Blunderbore in my cabin."

In a few minutes Mildmay's screen was drawn back by Colin, and the captain ushered in.

He shook hands kindly with Mildmay, and took a seat.

"Ha! ha!" he said, laughing; "so you see I'm better, and about before you. Sorry, though, to see you still in bed."

"Oh, I expect to be allowed to go to duty in a day or two."

"Mind you, Mr. Mildmay, I won't hear of your coming to duty one day before you are thoroughly well. I need hardly say," he added, "that I have caused my clerk, Mr. D'Austin—a capital fellow, and come of good old stock—to make a report of your gallant attempt to save my poor man's life."

"Thank you," returned Mildmay, with a slightly heightened colour. "But," he continued, "a singular thing has occurred. On board that slaver Mr. McLeod has discovered an old shipmate of mine."

"You surprise me."

"It is true. Poor Golava! He is well known on the east coast, and has acted as interpreter for many years, and done much good to British interests out there."

"Where is he, Mr. Mildmay? Have him in. I would like to see him."

"One moment, sir, if you please. Mark me, *I* can vouch for his former life and faithfulness, *he* himself must explain how he came on board this slaver, or what he is doing on this coast at all."

"True, true."

"You see I don't doubt him, sir, but it is best to have everything fair and above board."

"That's so."

"Mr. McLeod," cried Mildmay, and Colin appeared, "bring Golava."

"He is here."

Colin drew the curtain right back, and Golava stood for a moment in the doorway as if hesitating to enter. His eyes were fixed on Captain Blunderbore, and at first he did not observe Captain Mildmay in his cot.

Let me try to describe him. A little, fat, pleasant-faced Arab, almost as brown as a brick; so fat was he in face that his eyes seemed to wear a perpetual smile,

although in body he was not what you might term inconveniently stout, simply dapper. His dress was peculiar. I always had an idea that Golava's dress was one of his own choosing entirely, and that to some extent he affected the uniform of the British naval or marine officer. It was evident at all events that he had an eye for the beautiful, and for bright colours. Some parts of the Arab dress Golava had discarded, others retained. The big turban, for instance, would be found unhandy on board ship. Golava had left his on shore, and substituted a small black straw skull cap with a band of gold lace round it. The Arab's cloak he had also discarded, and wore a white cutaway jacket richly braided with crimson and gilt. This was worn loose and open, all the better to show off a very splendend affair in waistcoats. This vest was of a bright scarlet plush, and had gold braid all round the pockets and all up the edges. Had Golava worn a shirt it would have made a fine finish to his upper man, but as he did not, the naked brown chest, appearing above the waistcoat, where shirt-front should have been, looked somewhat eccentric at the very least. Then Golava's lower garments were wide white pan-jamas that ended a little below the knee, all the rest of him was brown legs and feet, except the portion that the sandals covered. He had a belt round his waist, *beneath* the waistcoat. Oh, Golava would never have consented to hide an inch of that waistcoat of his. Attached to the belt was a dagger which had once done

cluty as a middy's dirk, but the scabbard of which was now studded with more gems and precious stones than most midshipmen are worth.

Golava's eyes soon fell on Mildmay.

He passed Captain Blunderbore with a polite and respectful salute, then at once threw himself on his knees before the cot.

"My good Golava," said Mildmay, extending his hand, "I am really pleased to see you."

"And I," said Golava, "in grief to meet you. What ails my friend?"

As he spoke he pressed Mildmay's hand to his brow, and as he lowered it it was damp with tears.

"Sit down now, old friend," said Mildmay. "Yonder is our captain. He will be glad to hear your story."

"Poor man!" said Captain Blunderbore. "I perceive you are wounded in the shoulder."

"Only a scratch from a dagger," said Golava, though the wound was really far more serious. "Only a scratch. Now I tell you all my story. It is not long. It is true. My old friend Mr. Mildmay know right well I never tell a lie."

"I have never heard a lie from that man's lips, Captain Blunderbore," said Mildmay, solemnly.

"Good, good; go on, Mr. Golava."

"After you leave the coast, Mr. Mildmay," Golava continued, "I serve the Queen in several ships. They did catch plenty slaver. I was twice wounded; I was shot through the arm in a brush on shore capturing a

barracoon,* and another time, in boarding an Arab northern fighting dhow, I was stabbed with a spear in the chest. My people—the Arabs—hate me.”

“They have some little cause, Golava ; but go on.”

“Presently, gentlemen, I get tired of fighting. I cannot live in peace, though, at Zanzibar, so I beg my captain to give me and three of my wives passage to Sierra Leone and land me there with the Kroomen, to live in peace and quiet for the remainder of my days. I have plenty of money. So my good captain do so, and I happy for once. I have a big boat and a crew of Kroomen. I take long voyages down the coast, I hunt, I fish, I do altogether the gentleman. And when I from home my wives look after my little farm, plant the turmeric, and make cocoanut-oil. Oh, I ’ssure you, gentlemen, I was quite happy.

“But one day, when three hundred miles from home, on a low, wooded coast, I see this vile Portugee scoundrel sail out from the woods in his barque. I don’t like the look of him. I smell a rat, and clap on plenty sail, and away I go. Ah ! but they make sail, and that barque is swifter than the wind. They soon come up with me ; they fire, they shoot three men ; they sink my lovely boat, and take me and my crew prisoners.

“That is all. Here I am. Alas ! gentlemen, I may never perhaps see my poor wives again !”

* * * * *

* A slave station.

All next day the two ships, the man-o'-war and the slaver, lay near each other. The slaves, to the number of four hundred, were had up, and a mournfully pitiable lot they looked. It really seemed as though, having suffered so much and suffered so long, they cared but little now how soon their misery ended. It was sad to see some of these poor wretches in so worn and emaciated a condition, that their shoulder-blades were almost cutting the skin. The particular part of the coast they had come from even Barclay could not discover.

However, it was evident enough that so far these Portuguese fellows had worked the matter well, and that had they succeeded in running their cargo to Cuba they would have made a good thing of it.

It was a bad day's work, however, their picking up Golava and his bold Kroomen.

"They were not wise enough," said Golava, laughing, when explaining how the rising was effected. "They think they make my Kroomen work and me do cooking, because I can make a good curry. Ha, ha! my Kroomen and I did make a good curry, but we made it too hot for those blackguards. We put arms in the hands of the slaves, and when all ready we make the rush. They turned the gun on us, but we spoiled the sailing of the barque. Beaten back we were 'tis true, but all the same the British ship come. Fine vessel your *Theodora*, Captain Mildmay, but not so fast as the barque."

"You mustn't call me Captain Mildmay, though; there is but one captain on a ship-of-'war.' "

Benbow and M'Gee did all they could to make the slaves comfortable, and so did Barclay. He managed to make himself understood among them with the help of Golava's Kroomen, and I think the poor wretches must have taken the honest gunner for a kind of angel, or some being from a better world.

The *Theodora* and the barque parted company in a day or two, the former going on her voyage to Ascension, where she had despatches to leave, the barque bearing up for Sierra Leone, with orders to follow the man-o'-war to the Cape as soon as the slaves were disposed of and the barque condemned.

Twenty picked men accompanied Benbow, who was put in command of the slaver, with Colin as his second officer.

Golava went along, and Duncan Robb was corporal of the few marines, and a very proud young man he was in consequence.

Sierra Leone was then about four hundred and fifty miles west and south of them.

The wind was fair, however, and they hoped to reach this town within three days. The weather was fine too, for the rainy season had just given place to what we may call the cool, if there be any cool within ten degrees of the equator.

Benbow felt in his glory now, walking on his own quarter-deck, and Colin also enjoyed the change.

"It is glorious," said Colin, the first morning. "Is the weather always as bright and beautiful in these

regions? Is the sea always as blue, and are those shoals of flying fish and dancing dolphins always——”

“Stop, stop, my boy, don’t get romantic. No, lad, if you’d been here two months ago you would have found matters very different. The sky overcast with grey and black gloomy-looking clouds, the horizon close on board of us, the rain coming down steadily, constantly, and in buckets, the only variation being an occasional thunderstorm, with lightning more vivid than any I have ever seen except going round the Cape.”

“Well,” said Colin, “I’m glad I wasn’t here then; but isn’t this a fine little barque!

“Something like a clipper, Colin. Now I can tell you between our two selves, if the Spaniards or Portuguese always went to the expense of having a *Waterwitch* like this, it isn’t three of our six-knot cruisers that could capture one of them.”

“But then our cruisers have the steam.”

“And do about eight knots then. Granted; but these fellows know better than to come anywhere near a cruiser when the wind isn’t blowing.”

“I dare say,” said Colin, laughing, “the slavers took us for a collier.”

“Well, we’re not so bad-looking as that, though I’ve seen some smart colliers too in my time. The *Theodora* is fast for a cruiser even; but, dear boy, our Admiralty Lords, with all due respect to them, must make cruisers twice as fast as she is if England means to remain what she has ever been—‘mistress of the seas.’”

"Hullo! Golava; come up here and look about you."

Golava ascended to the poop and salaamed.

"*Yambo*," he said, bowing low.

"*Yambo sana*," said Benbow, returning the salute.

"Breakfast is all ready," said Golava.

"And you yourself have made the curry?"

"Yes, sir, and a good one you'll find it."

"Well, my worthy Golava, the cook in this case must even sit down and share it with us. But tell me, good Golava, doesn't your heart bound with delight at the prospect of so soon being once more in the arms—three pairs, Colin—of your beloved wives?"

"Not much," said Golava, laughing till his eyes quite disappeared.

"You undutiful dog, you," said Benbow; "but come along, we'll all descend to breakfast. Keep her full, Mr. Barclay."

"Ay, ay, sir."



Benbow in his *Waterwitch* crept up to Sierra Leone with a light evening breeze, and cast anchor in the river.

Next morning Colin was early astir; but long before he was awake he was partially sensible of a row of some kind going on alongside, of many strange voices jabbering, and of boats and canoes thumping and rasping against the barque's side.

"There is a fight of some sort going on," he said to himself as he dressed.

It was merely, however, the native boatmen squabbling among themselves, and at times even coming to blows. There was quite a crowd of canoes and boats hovering round the ship, and many a sturdy negro had clambered on board, and was busy selling fruit, yams, and sweet potatoes to the white sailors.

The barque was an object of very great attraction to the inhabitants of Freetown, both whites and natives, and became quite a show ship when it was rumoured about that she was a captured slaver.

The first thing Benbow did was to pay a visit of ceremony to the governor. He took one Krooman with him besides Golava, and Colin was left in charge of the vessel. There would be little or no difficulty in effecting the condemnation of the ship, Benbow found; only a few weeks would elapse before the Court could sit, for red tape rules the roast in everything connected with the service.

There would be little difficulty either, so Colin soon found out, in spending those few weeks with a great deal of pleasure. He had never been in so wild and beautiful a country before in his life. Golava himself became his guide, with a coup'e of negroes to carry guns and fishing-rods; so the woods and forests were explored and plenty of sport was obtained. Colin felt sorry one moment that he was not an artist, next moment he would have given all he possessed to be a

poet, but as Colin was neither he had to be content with simply gazing and admiring.

Of course he was invited to Golava's house. It stood in the outskirts of Freetown, in a quiet, retired compound, amid most charming tropical foliage and rare and beautiful flowers.

It was towards the afternoon of a very hot day when Colin and Golava arrived. They were evidently expected, and were ushered into Golava's best room. Fruits and sherbet were placed before Colin, and there was a prevailing odour of delicious curry wafted through the air by the quickly-moving punkah, that told Colin something more substantial and satisfying would soon follow the fruit.

But Golava, the lord and master of this domain, must seat himself in an easy arm-chair, made of straw, and for a time give himself all the airs of a king.

One of his wives hastened to remove his sandals, the other took off his turban, exposing his bare round nut of a head, which was as destitute of hair as a billiard-ball.

Then one wife shampooed and dried and powdered his skull, while at the same time another wife did the same kind office by his feet.

Sitting there, in his easy-chair, enjoying these attentions, with a radiant smile of satisfaction all over his round, fat face, he looked so funny and so ridiculous that Colin was obliged to laugh. He apologised to Golava for being so excessively rude as to laugh, but

candidly confessed that for the life of him he couldn't help it. Golava was no whit offended, but continued to smile in the same blissful, self-satisfied way until the ceremonies were all over.

But when the curried guinea-fowl came in, and the dishes of snowy rice, and the wonderfully-cooked and strange-looking fishes, and the piles of splendid fruits, then Colin and his guide sat down to table, and it was his—Colin's—turn to smile in a blissful way, and feel all over at peace with himself and all mankind.

At last the *Waterwitch* was condemned, the slaves were freed, and the prisoners thrown into prison to await a trial with which our story has nothing whatever to do.

But when the *Waterwitch* was wafted once more seawards on the wings of the land breeze, and evening fell and found them far at sea, then both Benbow and Colin confessed to each other that Sierra Leone was not "half a bad place," and that they had enjoyed what the Yankees call "a high old time of it," and hoped to return to that country on some not distant day.



XII.

*AT SIMON'S TOWN—A DESPATCH FROM THE
ADMIRALTY—A PIRATE AFLOAT*

CHAPTER XII.

AT SIMON'S TOWN—A DESPATCH FROM THE ADMIRALTY—A PIRATE AFLOAT.

THAT stern old Highland chieftain, McLeod, the father of Colin, was not a demonstrative man by any means, but when one morning he opened his daily paper—an exceedingly Conservative one—and read therein his son's name specially mentioned, with that of other officers, in a brief article under the somewhat sensational headings of

“CHASE AND CAPTURE OF A PIRATICAL SLAVER.

“RELEASE OF 500 SLAVES.

“GALLANT CONDUCT OF BRITISH OFFICERS,”

then it must be confessed it was with some degree of pardonable pride that he handed the paper across the table to Captain Peter.

Now, there is no journalism in all the wide world so fair and just as that of our own land. When we read extracts from French or Russian papers descriptive of their battles in other lands we are often obliged to pause and wonder, to place the morsel of buttered

toast or the cup of tea we were raising to our lips back upon the table again untouched, as items like the following meet our view :

“ Five hundred of the enemy killed !

“ Our loss trifling—a sergeant and five men wounded.”

The relation of such doughty deeds requires a deal of salt before it can be swallowed. Again, when some foreign nations lose a battle—I will not say the French or the Russians this time, because they, of course, never lost a battle—their journalists describe it as a brilliant engagement, in which the enemy suffered severely, and “ our forces for strategic purposes took up a position fifteen miles farther to the rear.”

People who can read between the lines know the real meaning of this. They can see “ our forces ” attacking the enemy in great force in the morning, fighting bravely and well, perhaps, but obliged at last to flee. Flee ? Ay, boys, there is no other name for it ; flee, and that fifteen miles is left strewn with their dead and dying. The position they take up at last “ for strategic purposes ” is taken up because they cannot flee any farther, the enemy being too tired to follow them, or darkness has come on and put an end to the carnage. And, oh ! that dreadful huddling together of a beaten army on the night after a battle. The cold, the misery, the hunger, the confusion, the absence even of discipline, and the frequent alarms that render any attempt at sleep impossible. May no lad who reads these lines ever experience the like !

But British troops *have* been beaten in fair fight, and whenever they were our home journals have boldly stated the facts. We must all do our best in this world, and leave the rest with Him who rules the destinies of the world. Having done our duty, I do not see that we need be ashamed to hold up our heads if misfortune follows. The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.

But here in the account of the capture of the slaver, as described in the Highland chief's newspaper, there was just a trifle of exaggeration.

The fact is, D'Austin, the aristocratic clerk, drew up the report and then read it to his commander. The main facts of the case were stated, and though there might be a little too much varnish, still it would be a pity to cut down so much fine writing ; therefore it was sent.

So Colin's father read it all over, not once only, but twice, for he really loved his son, and he said, as he passed the paper to Captain Peter,—

“ It isn't so bad of the youngster, is it ? Eh ? ”

That worthy must needs strike it with his hand a ringing smack that made old Raoul, the servant-man, jump, and set all the collies barking, then get off his seat and hobble five times betwixt the door and the fireplace, before he could speak.

“ It's nothing more than I expected,” he cried, at last. “ I tell you what it is, McLeod, our boy will be a post-captain before he is two-and-twenty.”

Colin's brother's eyes sparkled with joy. Colin's

mother's eyes so swam in tears that Ronald had to read the news to her himself.

"May Heaven protect my brave boy!" she said.

"To be sure," cried Uncle Peter, slapping his wooden leg. "To be sure. Heaven will protect him. Come, come, woman, it is laughing you should be instead of blubbering; only," he added, "there is never any accounting for anything a woman does. But I tell you what, sister, I feel so brim full of joy and hilarity that if I had two legs instead of one I'd just dance. Raoul, off with you, and tell Dominie Clayton to come over here at once. Tell him there is news from Colin. Tell him——"

But Raoul was away, flying like an old ferret, without his hat as usual.

In less than half an hour Raoul was back again, and with him the dominie, poor old Clayton, wreathed and wrinkled in smiles.

And what a forenoon of it Uncle Peter and he did hold to be sure!



Meanwhile the *Theodora* was quietly lying in Simon's Bay, and on that very forenoon Mildmay, quite recovered now, sat with his captain in the cabin engaged in conversation.

Between them was a despatch which had only that morning been received from the Admiralty.

"No, Mr. Mildmay," the captain was saying, "these

are not slavers that are doing the mischief. They are pirates out and out."

"Well, yes," replied Mildmay; "and I know some little thing about them too. You know I was up in the Persian Gulf before serving against these Liliputian pirates. They were junks and dhows, mostly the latter. Their crews were cut-throats of many different nationalities, the sweepings of the streets of Bombay and Calcutta, half-caste Portuguese from Goa, Arabs from the eastern shores of Africa, a few scoundrels of Chinamen, and may be, though not often, one or two Persians or Hindoos. But," added Mildmay, "these last I have seldom found to be very fond of that kind of work any more than we are. They are fonder of trade."

"Ah, Mr. Mildmay, you know more about them than I do, evidently."

Mr. Mildmay could not help thinking that he knew a good many other things that his worthy captain was scarcely conversant with, only he did not say so.

"But," said Captain Blunderbore, "there are more than small fry here to be caught, for here is particularly described a pirate—a real pirate, of the name of Gaspar Moravo."

"Yes," said Mildmay, "I know him."

"You know him?"

"I do, and so does Golava. Indeed Golava knows a deal more about the fellow than I myself do. But Moravo was not always a pirate."

"Well," said Blunderbore, laughing, "I don't suppose he was born a pirate."

"My dear sir, I'm glad I amuse you; but really, although Gaspar Moravo was not born a pirate, it was next thing to it. I know quite a deal about the fellow's history. He was singularly enough transformed from an honest slave-dealer—if I may be allowed for once to use the word 'honest' in connection with so dastardly a calling—to a pirate."

"No, don't say 'honest' slave-dealer, Mildmay, say 'veritable.'"

"Veritable, then," said Mr Mildmay.

"And you have met this Gaspar Moravo?"

"Years ago, sir," replied the lieutenant, "when out on the east coast, he commanded the *Spartan*, and many a good cargo of slaves he used to run from the more southerly shores of Africa to Zanzibar and farther north. Indeed, there is no saying where he did not sail in that rascally ship of his. Nor does any one know one tithe of the black and cowardly deeds this piratical scoundrel has been guilty of in his time. A slaver he was and is by trade, but the most merciless villain unhung. In a gale of wind off the Comoros once I was told he consigned no less than one hundred and fifty poor wretches to a watery grave, as an Atlantic liner sometimes does cattle, to lighten his ship.

"He did not draw the line at what—compared to his deeds—might be called legitimate slaving; he attacked, burned, and sank many an Indian craft, keeping

only the black hands, ruthlessly murdering the white.

"I was the means, under God's providence," continued Mildmay, "of clearing the sea of this ocean scourge for a time. In boats I attacked him. It was out on the low sandy shores north of Bareda. He beached his vessel, but escaped inland with most of his cut-throat crew. Only once I saw him after. It was in the slave-market of Lamoo. He passed me quickly, but as he did so he hissed out the one word—

"'Revenge!'"

"Well," said Captain Blunderbore, "I trust that before very long he will have an opportunity of taking his revenge on you."

"If he can."

"Yes, if he can."

There was a knock at the door, and Captain West, the marine officer, entered to make a report.

"Another time," he said. "I didn't know you were busy."

"Come in," cried the captain. "We have had a despatch from England. Is your sword sharp, West?"

West smiled.

"My servant sees to that," he said. "But what is on the books, sir? A little fighting up the channel? Slavers? An outbreak at Port Natal? Another Kaffir war?"

"Ah! you wouldn't guess in a month," replied the captain.

"In that case I must beg for information."

"We're going to have a hunt for pirates."

"Whew!" whistled West, and so astonished was he that he dropped into a chair without invitation.

Captain West was a remarkable man in many respects. Probably nobody enjoyed life more thoroughly than he did, but in so quiet a way that it seemed a wonder to all who knew him.

West painted in oil and water colours, and his sketches of foreign lands had graced many a page of the London illustrated papers. West played too, and had a piano in his cabin which occupied fully one half of it. Indeed so big was this piano that the cot in which West slept had to be slung over it. When playing, his whole life and soul was bound up in his performance. He was then the musician and nothing else. West was a good swordsman, and a good shot with the revolver, and about the coolest Englishman under fire one could imagine. He never talked a great deal—that was another of his peculiarities.

I must be allowed here to tell one short anecdote of him. It will serve to illustrate his character.

It was at the capture of a kind of slave depôt in a mangrove forest out on the east coast. There were there about six hundred slaves in all, and the Arabs to whom they belonged made a most determined resistance, both inside and outside the palisades, or bulwarks, as our blue-jackets called them.

It was hot work, but the Arabs had the worst of it.

Now West had behaved with no conspicuous gallantry, it is true, but with all the *sang froid* and military etiquette he would have displayed at a parade on the square of Chatham barracks. He was dressed too during the fight in the most correct fashion. And the following is something very like the little speech he made to his men just before they boarded the palisade. They were all of them red marines, by the way.*

"I say, you fellows," he said, "I know you'll do your duty. Marines always do. Ahem! I was going to make a speech, but there is such a confounded row!" Here he drew his sword and pointed to the enemy. Then, "Away, men!" he shouted, "West is with you."

Shortly after this he had been seen in the enemy's midst fighting bravely enough, but he appeared to single out the very best Arab swordsmen, and when fighting he was evidently studying their tactics, and when a man fell at last under his superior skill he looked disappointed.

But now there sat Captain West looking at his chief with very open eyes indeed.

"I had thought," he said, at last, "that pirates had gone out of fashion. What does this fellow we are going to smash look like, Captain Blunderbore?"

Then Captain Blunderbore told him all he knew.

After this, all that dear, funny, fat old Golava had told them was commented on; and so, what with the

* Red marines—men of the R.M.L.I. (Royal Marine Light Infantry), called red from the colour of their coats or jackets.

knowledge contained in the despatch from home, the information given by Mildmay, and that vouchsafed by the genial but garrulous Golava, the history of the pirate, Gaspar Moravo, or, as West persisted in calling him, the "nautical marauder," was finally pretty well elicited.

Now, as this identical individual, Gaspar Moravo, did really exist and do a deal of mischief round the shores of India, China, and the Persian Gulf, I shall in the next chapter give a short account of him.

Mildmay, West, and Captain Blunderbore sat talking in the cabin till two bells, then they were asked to stay to luncheon.

The ports of the *Theodora* were open, and from those of Captain Blunderbore's cabin such a view was visible as one may roam the wide world over, as the song says, and not see surpassed.

A bay that is more of a gulf, so long and extended is it, surrounded on both sides by rocks and mountains, but possessing a horizon of its own at the head.

At present it is sleeping in the sunlight. Clouds there are in the sky, just a few long white flakes here and there, but nothing to overshadow the blue, *blue*, cool-like, smooth, transparent water. All the mountains are a mass of charming tints and colours—greens, browns, and purples, and shades of crimson. The day is hot; it is midsummer in this part of the world, and will be Christmas in a week's time. There is hardly a breath of air to raise a ripple on the water, but above the table a white punkah is hung, and the very smallest

second-class boy in the ship is squatting in a distant corner pulling the string.

Dr. M'Gee is on shore collecting specimens, and Quentin Steele is with him, for there really is nothing doing on board.

Only Mr. Gayly, the wasp-waisted smart little Gayly, deems it his duty to walk the snowy quarter-deck, if only to see that the signalman keeps a good look out.

The officers at lunch in the captain's cabin can hear Mr. Gayly's light tread just over their heads; it is a very regular one, and so light that it does not annoy them in the slightest.

But suddenly there is a break in its rhythm. Gayly has stopped. He is looking at something, that is evident.

Then they heard Gayly's voice.

"Signalman there!"

"Yessir."

"Are you asleep?"

"Asleep, sir, no."

"But I say you are, sir. You *are* asleep. Don't dare to contradict me, sir."

"Well, beggin' ycr pardon, I——"

"Don't beg pardons, but keep your eyes skinned. Can't you see they are signalling from the Admiral's office?"

"Oh! yes, sir, I sees it now. Thank'ee, sir. Signalling to the flag-ship they bees, sir. Ship coming in, but nearly becalmed. A barque."

"Do you hear?" said Mildmay to the captain,
"did you hear, sir?"

"Yes, I hear, and I do hope it is Penbow come at
last."



XIII.

*THE TRUE STORY OF A PIRATE—GOLAVA'S AD-
VENTURES—CHRISTMAS AT MIDSUMMER.*

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TRUE STORY OF A PIRATE—GOLAVA'S AD- VENTURES—CHRISTMAS AT MIDSUMMER

CAPTAIN BLUNDERBORE was right ; it was Benbow in his *Waterwitch*.

They were towed into the bay, for the wind had quite left them at midday, and very soon the long rakish clipper-barque was safely at anchor near the *Theouora*, and Benbow and Colin, both looking as fresh as brook-trouts but as brown as nuts in October, had gone on board their own ships and made their report and told the story of their voyage.

"You've done excellently well, both of you," said Blunderbore, laying one hand kindly on a shoulder of each.

They were standing the quarter-deck, and looking towards the *Waterwitch*.

This was the name, by-the-bye, that Benbow had given her.

"Why," said Blunderbore, "what have you been doing to the barque ? She doesn't look the same."

Benbow laughed and was pleased.

"Well," he said, "I didn't like to have our fellows idle altogether while they were at Sierra Leone, so I bought a few buckets of paint, and just touched her up a bit. Then I had the masts all scraped, and—there she is."

"And," said Mildmay, "she really is a pretty craft. Pity she is going to be burned. If she were mine, now, I'd knock that poop off her and give her a flush deck."

"That would be a decided improvement," said Benbow, holding his head to one side and viewing her with the critical eye of a sailor. "And, as you say, Mr. Mildmay, it is a pity she should be burned. But I'm not so sure she ought to be. What do you say, Captain Blunderbore?"

"Oh, I'd keep her if it was my will. But it is service, you know, to burn slavers."

"Yes, and I don't mind a dirty old dhow, or as many dirty old dhows as you please, being consigned to the flames, but a thing like that! Just look at her now."

"Ay," said West, the artist, looking up from a sketch of her he was making, "she is beautiful, rising and falling there on the gentle swell, and the blue clear water around her, and the bits of brown floating seaweed, and those splendidly-tinted medusa-like umbrellas made of glass, all afloat in the water."

"Hullo!" cried Benbow, "here comes the doctor and Steele. How d'ye do, old Sawbones? What have you in your bag? Anything to eat?"

"Birds, and moths, and weeds, and rushes, and rats," said M'Gee. "Man! you're both looking fine and hardy. West yonder is so fat, getting——"

"Stop a bit," said West, good-humouredly. "We're all going up the 'Bique to fight a real live pir—nautical marauder. That'll take the fat off your poor West, the butt of all your chaff."

"Hullo! Gayly, how goes it?" cried Benbow.

Gayly gave him the tips of two fingers, and Benbow nearly wrenched them off.

There was quite a deal to talk of that evening at mess. The captain was dining with the admiral, so was Gayly, but this did not tend to depress anybody. The captain would not have been in the wardroom had he remained on board, and Gayly's chair was well filled by Quentin. Next him sat Colin, and even supernumerary Brown was there. He was appointed to the *Theodora* after all, and very glad he was to remain in her.

The messman had placed a chair for this fat-faced young gentleman next to West's, who was vice-president.

M'Gee was president to-night, but no sooner was every one seated than,

"No, no, no," cried M'Gee. "I object. Here, Mr. Brown, change places, please, with Mr. McLeod. I can't have two 'fatties' right in front of me."

The exchange was effected.

"If I were West I'd give it to you," said Benbow, laughing.

"West won't," the doctor replied. "West is a kind of out-patient of mine, so he has to be civil."

"A patient of yours, doctor! then the fates help him!"

Now while these jolly sailors are dining I will give the reader a short sketch of a somewhat remarkable man, to wit,

GASPAR MORAVO.

The Arabs who for so long a time have been engaged in the slave trade on the coast of Africa never did and perhaps never will bear anything but the deadliest hatred to the British, especially if they wear the blue jackets of the man-o'-war's man, or the uniform of marines.

This hatred is always smouldering, and every now and then, on every chance in fact, it bursts out into flame.

In my own time I have not only known bold resistance to the death made against our fellows, when boarding a dhow or capturing a barracoon, but revenge taken by direct violence by plotting and scheming, and by the hands of hired assassins.

The Arabs dominate the coast north of Zanzibar, they dominate the Somali Indians and the other half-caste tribes, and, however much either of these latter may pretend to be our friends, the Arab is the master whom they obey; the Arab they have always with them, they respect and fear him, and so cases are constantly occurring of boats' crews being massacred, of

poor blue-jackets killed in the streets by night—when sound asleep, perhaps, for Jack will sleep anywhere at times—and of officers disappearing and never being heard of more. Whatever became of the poor gunner of the *P——n* we lost in Mozambique, I wonder? Where did second-master *P——r* get to, that his pleasant round face never appeared at the mess-table again? Where did Lieutenant *M——* wander to? He was never seen by his messmates again, alive or dead. Who did to the death two men of the *A——* in a back slum of Zanzibar? Who enticed our boats' crews on shore at Bareda and massacred every man and officer? Who? Who but the Arabs?

But stay, we must not judge even these too harshly, nor can I forget that I owe my life to an Arab, or that I have had many a good friend among them. No, we will not judge them rashly, we will rather look upon their evil deeds, or try to do so, from their own point of view—a view probably never taken by a British sailor before. But I have seen a good deal of the home and inner life of the Arab slave-dealer. I had the *entrée* while on the coast—no matter how obtained, 'twas honest—to a kind of society none of our fellows ever thought of cultivating. It had been remarked of me often that I nearly always went on shore alone, seldom bothering even to ask for a ship's boat, unless it were the dingy, but chartering an outrigger canoe. I was studying natural history.

Well, the Arabs are brought up from their infancy to

look upon the British cruisers as their enemies, their sailors as their bitterest foes. We can hardly wonder at this ; for in putting down the nefarious slave trade do we not render many a family homeless, make children fatherless, and mothers widows ?

Yet the good work must go on. Missionaries on shore must preach peace and goodwill to men, our brave sailors at sea must put down the slave-trader with the strong hand of the law at all risks, at all costs, till from end to end the vast continent of Africa shall have seen civilisation and been made free.

Now there is one thing the Arab slaver loves above all things, and that is gold. He prefers it even to his thirst for English blood. There is nothing he will not do for it, nothing he will not barter ; he will sell his honour for it—ay, and risk his life as well.

Were I to write you the whole life of Gaspar Moravo you would say it read like a romance. A romance, alas ! with a bad ending to it, but it was nevertheless a romance that grew out of our (British) endeavours to put down the slave trade on the coast of Africa. Of his early days little need be said. He was born at sea : his father was a slave-trader, a daring, bold, unscrupulous man, and cruel in the extreme. His main object was to make money by the nefarious trade he had taken up—that of capturing slaves, running them down to the coast, and selling them in the slave-market of Zanzibar. Sometimes he ran cargoes of picked slaves—bought in the market—north to the

Gulf of Persia, where on being taken inland they found a ready sale.

It was in Persia where Gaspar when only a boy first fell in with a patron whom in after life he served long and faithfully, and who supplied him with money to purchase and arm dhow after dhow, and thus carry on his patron's business and his own pleasure. Gaspar when young had seen his father struck dead at his feet by the bayonet of a British sailor. It was in the fight between Admiral McH—— (not an admiral then) and two northern fighting dhows, or pirates, so called.

In a manner of speaking—and this only proves how careful we ought to be to turn our talents to good account—in a manner of speaking, I say, Gaspar was a genius. Had he been born under luckier stars and received a fitting education he might have made a name in his own country of which his countrymen would have been proud. He had undoubted ability, and could have won laurels on the battle-deck of a man-o'-war or as a general in the tented field.

But the turning-point in Gaspar's history came at last.

It was a wild and stormy day about the setting-in of the rainy season on the coast. The weather was dark and threatening, with heavy rain-clouds and driving mists hurrying ever and anon across the troubled water. It was a day on which you might have witnessed the curious phenomenon of two thunder-storms raging at one and the same time in

different directions of the compass. Yet the wind was by no means steady, nor was the sea very high. Sometimes a white squall would sweep with hurricane force across the sea; then, passing, leave calm and clouds and muttering thunders.

It was hardly a day, Gaspar thought, that British cruisers would be much on the alert. He had been lying concealed in a wooded creek for weeks, waiting the chance to slip out and get away up north with his cargo of slaves. He was full to the hatches.

He had reckoned without his host for once, however.

He ran into the very jaws of the British lion. Had the wind kept up he might even yet have escaped. It did not. The breeze failed and Gaspar fought. A desperate struggle it was, and a short one. It took place close to the coast, near a little village called Bareda, which I doubt if you will find on the map. It lies 'twixt the Red Sea and Magedona. Gaspar's dhow was captured. Gaspar himself leapt into the sea, just as Captain Semmes of the *Alabama* did. There was no yacht to pick Gaspar up, though, but he swam on shore through the surf, and took to the rocks till the storm blew over; but from that hour he was dubbed pirate—had he not shed English blood?—and a price was set on his head. At all events, whoever met him were to be justified, if not rewarded, in slaying him.

Gaspar found a passage back to his Persian patron, who refitted him and sent him back to the cruising

ground. This patron could afford to pay Gaspar well, and did.

Were space no object with us, the temptation to describe Gaspar's patron's home would be irresistible. It was a lovely spot in a lovely land, a castle of indolence. And he who dwelt there was a true prince of indolence. Young he was, dark-haired, dark-eyed, but fair in skin, a dreamer, a voluptuary, with no thought save that of pleasure, no aspirations, no ambitions.

Did Gaspar love his master? No! he despised him, and only served him faithfully for his own ends. It suited him to do so.

Gaspar Moravo had no scruple against taking life, and he was one of those who believe in the motto of the Clan Cameron—

“Whatever a man dares he can do.”

Before he had been a piratical slave-hunter for many years he owned a whole fleet of dhows.

Do not imagine that those dhows ever ran any risk of capture by British cruisers if it could be avoided. No! for Gaspar's fleet carried papers from the then Sultan of Zanzibar, which gave them his Majesty's permission to trade in so-called “household slaves.”

It was only on rare occasions that even Gaspar dared to sail without these.* And, to make assurance

* These papers could be had in those days for a small bribe to the Sultan's ministers.—G. S.

doubly sure, the pirate was as often in disguise as not. But when Gaspar became owner and master of that fleet witch of the Indian Ocean, called, among other names, the *Castigo*, he became still more daring, and ambition carried him away.

The aim and end of all this ambition was to effect the destruction of one of her Majesty's cruisers. For this he plotted and planned for years and years; and his adventures in doing so, both ashore and afloat, both in England and out on the coast, would fill a book.

Gaspar was not slow in perceiving that nearly all the cruisers on the coast were strong to fight but *useless in a chase*.

Dear reader, many a hundred pounds would be at this moment lying at my banker's to my credit, had the vessels in which I sailed and served been only fast enough to come up with the slavers they chased. Speed in a cruiser is half the battle. Wait till England goes to war, and fits out vessels that *can* sail and steam, and we will hear and read of exploits at sea that will completely eclipse all the stories of derring-do that have ever yet been done or described.

Gaspar waxed wealthy at last, and as he did so he became more daring.

For a time, too, fortune favoured him. The ship he had succeeded in getting, and which he named the *Castigo*—or *Scourge*—was undoubtedly a fleet one. He seemed, too, to be ubiquitous. She was heard of

one day on the African coast, and next she appeared to have turned up in the Persian Gulf or in China.

Few of our cruisers ever saw her; many did not believe in her existence.

One of our vessels boarded her three times, found her papers all right (apparently), and nothing suspicious—not even a slave-iron—on board of her. She was at that time passing for a sugar ship.

But it was quite evident that information had been received by our lords at home, which quite convinced them that the *Castigo* was not the myth which some navy captains, who could not find her, or couldn't catch her when they did find her, would have her to be.

And so, very quietly indeed, the *Theodora*—a really fleet and good vessel—had been commissioned and dispatched.

It was a capital appointment for Blunderbore, who was a favourite in high places, not, I'm sorry to say, for his intrinsic worth, but for other reasons which need not be named. A capital appointment! The *Theodora* was going on special service, and success would bring with it special honours, promotions, and all kinds of pretty things for those engaged in it.

The worst of it was that no one on board, not even honest Captain Blunderbore himself, had an inkling of the kind of service he was detailed for.

His orders had simply been to creep down the western coast of Africa, and break the back of slavery

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there if he saw a chance—in this, as we have already seen, he was singularly fortunate—then to carry despatches to Ascension, and afterwards to go to the Cape and wait for orders.

So this is how matters stood when we find the *Theodora* lying in Simon's Bay on this lovely evening.

But let me state now that I never rightly knew what became of Benbow's *Waterwitch*. I only know that the aristocratic clerk D'Austin wrote a letter on service about her, dictated by Captain Blunderbore, who really was instigated by Benbow in this matter. I rather think, however, she was finally burned. And the more was the pity; she was a beauty; only service is service.

After dinner a boat came off from the *Aurora*, with a few of the junior officers of that crack frigate.

Their captain, or rather commodore—O'Connell was his name—was also dining on shore with the admiral. So the evening was spent in a very happy and jolly fashion indeed. Old Golava—old is here a term of endearment—was had into the wardroom, and given sherbet to drink, and much fun was got out of him. Indeed, to hear Golava tell of his adventures was great amusement. There was, to begin with, a charm about his very style of relation that was delightful; then you could see as well as hear that he was telling nothing but the truth, describing simply the events of his everyday life.

At one moment Golava would have you sweeping along in boats, about to make an attack upon some armed dhow that lay round the corner of a wood in a creek, and so graphically would he describe this that you seemed to see everything as it occurred ; away on the star-board of the boats the bright blue sea melting insensibly into the distant horizon, the woods on the port side rolling down to the very water in a cloudland of green, the lazy medusæ or turtle floating about in the transparent water, the perspiring blue-jackets half naked and bending to their strong straight oars, and the stolid faces of the hardy marines quietly loading with ball cartridge.

Next moment Golava would have you on the deck of that dhow, and you could actually see the tall long-haired Arabs falling before the rush of British cutlasses, or casting their spears and guns away and leaping headlong overboard.

In the middle of this graphic and terrible relation Golava would raise a laugh by saying in an earnest and business-like fashion : " But, gentlemen, you see, I'm no hand to fight much, I board *with*, but *after* the marines, and look about for a quiet corner to hide till the scrimmage is over."

Then Golava would suddenly transport you to the densest part of an African forest by night, and you could see a dark figure creeping stealthily from tree to tree, or crawling along snake-like through the cactus bushes, till it got within ear-shot of a grass hut, in

which some gentlemen Arabs were discussing their plans of running a cargo of slaves from Brava to Zanzibar or *vice versâ*. That figure would be Golava's. And if you asked, "Weren't you a bit scared sometimes, Golava?" "Scared?" Golava would reply. "Bless you, yes, gentlemen. I always move about when doing work of this kind with my heart in my mouth."

Then Golava would suddenly change the scene, and you would find him just approaching his own house door at H—n in Zanzibar, where his wives dwelt.



Christmas was spent at Simon's Town.

It seems strange to sit down to roast beef and plum-pudding with the thermometer standing at 90 degrees in the shade, and all the ports open, and a punkah waving through the hot air over your head.

But such was the case with our heroes on this particular Christmas.

Yet they were happy, and one thing had occurred only the day before that tended to make them additionally happy. The English mail-boat had arrived and brought letters from home.

XIV.

*LIFE ON THE OCEAN WAVE—A YEAR'S CRUISE IN
INDIAN WATERS—STRANGE ADVENTURES.*

CHAPTER XIV.

LIFE ON THE OCEAN WAVE—A YEAR'S CRUISE IN INDIAN WATERS—STRANGE ADVENTURES.

COMMODORE O'CONNELL, of the *Aurora*—or the *Roarer*, as all the blue-jackets called her—was a right good old fellow, and something of a character in his way.

Irish he was to the backbone, and did not deny his country ; indeed, he was proud of it. and often assumed just the least taste in the world of the brogue—enough, and no more, to give a kind of piquancy or flavour to his remarks, like a dash of cayenne pepper upon a poached egg.

Blunderbore and he were old friends. They really were fond enough of each other ; their wives and their families both lived in the same town in England, and *they* were also fond of each other ; but there existed between O'Connell and Blunderbore, and between their wives and families also, a little service jealousy. That is all.

Blunderbore was of bluer blood than old O'Connell ; but then Blunderbore was *not* a commodore.

Blunderbore's wife and daughters prided themselves

on their *blue* blood ; but O'Connell was a commodore, and O'Connell's wives and daughters cocked their caps accordingly. So even my boy readers will see how the land lay, and what particular spirit instigated a remark which O'Connell made one day shortly before the *Theodora* sailed away up the 'Bique on her special service. They had been dining together in the old *Roarer*.

"It's all very well, Blunderbore, sending a craft like the *Theodora* after this imaginary piratical slaver, but then you know it's an expense to the country."

"Bother the expense!" he said ; "that doesn't come out of your pocket, O'Connell, nor out of mine either."

"Ah ! but the taxpayer should be thought of, sir. Now, here am I, lying most of my time half idle, in a good frigate. Why, I want to know, didn't they send me after this imaginary piratical dhow?"

"For the simple reason, O'Connell—and I tell you straight—you could never expect to catch the *Castigo*—she does twelve knots easily—in this old tub of a *Roarer*, as our fellows call her."

"Tub of a *Roarer* ! Do they ? Hum ! Well, Blunderbore, you are cool, to say the least of it, to tell me this on board my own ship. Tub of a *Roarer* ! Eh ?"

Blunderbore felt sorry he had gone so far, so he said soothingly,—

"You know very well, O'Connell, that you haven't got my sailing power. Have you, now ? And you

haven't got my knotage under steam either. Come now."

O'Connell cracked a walnut most viciously before he replied,—

"Captain Blunderbore, sir! At two miles distant I could blow your confounded *Castigo*, or whatever her name is, clean out of the water. Honolulu! sir," he continued, "I wish I could only meet this Gaspar Moravo fellow. I'd make a Gaspar of him. He wouldn't gasp again, I can tell you. Ha! ha! ha!"

O'Connell laughed at his own little joke, and as Blunderbore joined him heartily, the commodore was much mollified, and the two parted in the evening the very best of friends.

O'Connell fell asleep that night and dreamed that *he* had taken the piratical slaver and done his friend out of all the prize-money and out of all the honour and glory. He laughed, when shaving next morning, as he remembered his dream—laughed till he cut himself

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If there did exist a little jealousy between the captains of the *Aurora* and the *Theodora*, there was nothing but genuine good fellowship between the ward-room officers of those ships. And when the *Theo'* sailed away at last on the wings of a ten-knot breeze, the *Roarer* manned her yards and gave the outgoing vessel many a ringing cheer, the while the band played a good-bye air on the quarter-deck.

The *Theodora* got into rough weather soon after leaving the Cape. The breeze that had carried them out of the bay veered and increased to a gale of almost hurricane force. But the good ship stood it well, and passed many a vessel lying-to almost under bare poles.

Benbow was delighted with his ship; so was every one on board, for the matter of that, only, being her navigating lieutenant, Benbow seemed to feel himself responsible for all the doings of the gallant craft when she was under sail and not steam.

The voyage to the Persian Gulf was not devoid of interest nor of adventure, but neither of these can I pause to describe at present. Suffice it to say that the *Theodora* called at Mozambique, that she lay at Johanna for a whole week and coaled, that she delivered despatches and letters at Zanzibar, where at least a fortnight was spent, and much enjoyed by all on board—and here Mildmay and Golava met many an old friend, but the information picked up about the piratical slaver was simply *nil*—and that after a week at the strange and beautiful islands of Seychelles, they started once more, and in due time reached their cruising-ground.

But if any one on board the *Theodora* imagined for a moment that they had only to reach the Persian Gulf, sight this *Castigo*, and sink her, he was mistaken.

Perhaps Gaspar actually knew of their coming; anyhow he kept out of the way. Perhaps he said to

himself, "Only very young sparrows are taken with chaff."

The *Theodora* searched the Gulf, and she searched the Red Sea. She called at Aden for information, she went down the coast on a wild-goose chase, and, though there she captured some dhows, which added to prospective prize-money, she never saw the pirate.

She might have been the *Flying Dutchman* for anything anyone seemed to know about her.

Some rumours of her whereabouts at last reached Captain Blunderbore's ears, and he returned to the Gulf. But all in vain. No, not quite in vain, for a sailor's proper place is on board a man-o'-war. And I can tell you that the men of the *Theodora* were never idle. Gayly was a good task-master, and Mildmay a stickler for duty. So it was drill, drill, drill, all day long, from prayers in the morning till quarters in the evening.

About once a month there would be night quarters. No one knew, except Captain Blunderbore himself, when this was to take place. But suddenly the bugle would ring out the assembly, and hardly had the last notes died away over the water ere every man Jack was in his place; then an imaginary enemy was supposed to be visible under the stars, on beam or bow, and the great guns gave tongue, or suddenly perhaps the "cease firing" would be heard and boarders would be prepared for. The whole business occupied about an hour.

Gayly's shrill commanding voice was always heard, everywhere apparently. He had good eyes too, for once during a sham action of this kind he noticed that Dr. McGee, after laying out his instruments, etc., laid himself out quite at ease and began to read. This did not suit Gayly's notions of strict service, so during a lull he sang down to the doctor,—

"Surgeon, there is a man killed."

"Then he's beyond my power," said McGee, looking up without getting up.

"Surgeon," shouted Gayly, "a man is shot through the leg."

"Send him below here," cried the doctor, who was not overwell pleased; "send him down, sir. I'm quite prepared to lop a limb from any living man on board, even from the second lieutenant himself."

Gayly said no more.

Well, the men had fire quarters very often, and life-boat-crew quarters, to say nothing of gun-drill, rifle-drill, cutlass, pike, and bayonet exercise, and when not drilling they were at something else, washing or make-and-mending clothes. Yes, there is always plenty to do on a ship-of-war.

Colin grew in strength, and though little more than sixteen, was as hard and manly-looking as could be wished.

He always wrote a letter to his mother once a week, describing his life on board and his cruises on shore. To be sure, he could not post his letter every week,

but whenever a chance offered he had only to run down below to his sea-chest and pop the manuscripts into a ready-directed envelope, and away it went.

More than a year thus passed away. The *Theodora*, tired of poking around the Gulf, started off on a cruise round India. They called at Bombay first, and there they received despatches from home directing their movements, which for a time were to be devoted entirely to "the protection of British commerce and British interests."

From Bombay the *Theodora* went to the Laccadive Islands, then on to the Maldives. These latter isles of the Indian Ocean were a favourite resort of the piratical slavers. Golava told Mildmay this, but he added that it was very unlikely the pirate was there at present. Never mind, Blunderbore had such faith in his Arab that a six weeks' boat cruise was ordered. This was simply a glorious outing for the officers and men of the *Theodora*, four armed boats in all. But they saw no pirates—alive, that is, for there was undoubted evidence that Gaspar had been here, and that he had not been idle. Probably he had hidden among these islands, and sallied out now and then to attack ships, for here were the remains of his camp, his huts of bamboo, and, beached and burned to the water's edge, no less than three vessels.

Where were the crews of these unfortunate ships? Who can tell? But unburied human bones lay bleaching on the sand; in the interior they found a

skeleton hanging by the neck to a cocoa-de-mer tree, and two or three other skeletons half hidden by the grass, with green-and-crimson lizards basking on their bare ribs, and horrid brown-green scorpions running in and out of the skulls.

This boat cruise was one long delicious picnic, nor was it entirely devoid of result, for although they came across no pirates, they captured and burned several slavers.

They duly measured them to get at the tonnage before they set them on fire, and I may tell you *sub rosâ* they did not make them any smaller on paper than they had been afloat.

From the Maldives they went to Ceylon. Quentin, Benbow, and Colin went off elephant-shooting here.

It is cruel sort of work. Poor Colin got nearly killed. A bull elephant or tusker attacked the party. Colin got into a tree; the monster tore it up by the roots and threw it into a pond, Colin and all. The branches held him down. Duncan Robb dashed in to the rescue, and brought his master to bank, but it was an hour before Colin opened his eyes.

From Ceylon Blunderbore sent a long despatch home to head-quarters, describing in glowing language the result of the cruise round the Maldives. Indeed, D'Austin so worded this document that it read as though the *Theodora* had chased the pirates from the islands, and were sweeping them from the seas. And good old fogies at home believed it, and thought they

did right well by keeping the *Theodora* on special service to protect the commerce of the British nation.

Our gallant cruisers spent a month at Calcutta, then cruised south among the Andamans and Nicobar Islands.

At the Andamans, West was one of the officers who landed to have a look round. He went off somewhere sketching, and by-and-bye Benbow's little black servant Othello rushed to the beach where Benbow and Colin were preparing to go off.

"Golly, golly, run quick!" cried the blameless Ethiopian; "dey have catchee Capting West for true, and dey are going to cookee he."

Benbow hastily got his fellows together, and went off to the rescue. Othello guided them to an Indian village far away in the bush.

They did not arrive one moment too soon. Poor West was found tied to a tree, and the savages were about to bleed him. He had a nice view from the spot where he was tied of the preparations being made to cook and eat him.

"It was very unpleasant," West said that evening at dessert, and just after Benbow had entertained the mess for half an hour with a graphic and flowery description of the whole affair.

"Well," said McGee, "if you'd followed out my instructions you wouldn't be so fat, you know. A fellow like you, West, must be no end of a temptation to a hungry cannibal!"

"Doctor," said West emphatically, "I'll begin dumb-belling again to-morrow morning."

Penang was next visited, then Sumatra and Borneo. Then north they went to Hong Kong, and thence to Yeddo, in Japan.

Up here they heard quite a deal about pirates, but they saw none.

However, the captain and D'Austin wrote more despatches, and lay quietly at Yeddo for three months.

Then the return voyage was made to Bombay. But one night—and a lovely night it was, a bright full moon in the sky, and stars like Koh-i-noors—the *Theodora* went on shore on a reef. Lucky for her there was no wind, and that it was moonlight. Guns were put into the boats, and coals thrown overboard, but all to no purpose. The *Theodora* would not budge. But at daylight a steamer luckily hove in sight, and after five or six hours' hard work and incessant noise the *Theodora* got clear, and went—convoyed by the steamer, for she was making a deal of leakage—to Bombay.

Another despatch had, of course, to be written home about this. Everything must be reported, but naturally it was not couched in such glowing terms as either of the former.

The accident necessitated a month in dry dock at Bombay.

They found the *Aurora* there, somewhat to their

surprise, and a very pleasant time was spent by both ships.

Benbow declared that the accident had really done the *Theodora* good, and that improvements were being made on her in dock that would greatly improve her powers of speed. Dear old irrepressible Benbow, nothing in the world seemed capable of damping his ardour!

One evening a little party dined at the Biculla Club. It consisted of the four friends, staunch and true—Benbow, Mildmay, Colin, and Quentin. They were just commencing fruit, when D'Austin, dressed in mufti of most fashionable cut, sauntered into the room.

"Hullo, here's D'Austin! Come and sit down, D'Austin; just in time for dessert."

D'Austin laid aside his lavender-coloured gloves, his gold-headed cane, and silk hat, and sank languidly into a chair.

"Thanks! I won't eat, though; so howidly hot! Long walk, and that sort o' thing. Waitah, bwing me a she'bet—iced, ye know."

"Well, D'Austin, been to the office? What's the news?"

"Oh, howid news! As soon as repaiahs are completed we're off to the Cape again. Such a bore!"

"A Blunderbore, eh?" said Mildmay, laughing.

D'Austin looked at him a moment.

"I'll go on to the balcony," he drawled. "It is insufferably hot heah, gentlemen."

"You've offended my lord," said Benbow.

Now D'Austin was always with the captain, and got news before any one. It was not long, therefore, before he was joined on the balcony by his shipmates, who really wanted to hear the news.

It was a dark but starry night. Down beneath them were the wide lawns and shrubberies, and there ghostly lights were flitting about or dancing up and down—the gigantic fireflies. The hum of the native city, the beating of tom-toms, and an occasional wild, unearthly shriek fell on their ears.

Far away out yonder was the sea. It was not visible, but they knew it was there; they felt it was there; they were sailors.

"Heigho!" said Mildmay. "I shan't be sorry when we're afloat once more."

Then D'Austin told them the news at once. A despatch had come. They were ordered off down Mauritius way as soon as they were fit for sea.

That day soon came, and away went the *Theodora* once more.

Bombay and all its surroundings never looked more charming than it did on this lovely morning. Like the sky itself, the sea was blue and placid. The houses and public buildings stood out white and clear against its azure background; in front was the forest of masts, shipping from every land and clime. Early boats were leaving the bundahs with shout and song and rippling laughter; and the romantic isle of Elephanta

with its shadows of purple and violet, seemed to float in the water like some giant raft.

Away went the *Theodora*, a broad white wake behind her, the smoke from her funnel trailing over the ocean for miles like some mighty snake. On board her every one was cheerful and happy. Long after the last notes of the *Roarer's* band had died away in the distance the gulls kept up their farewell song, and sailed tacking and tacking round the vessel. Their graceful motions in the air and their brightness, swiftness, and beauty were in keeping with the scene. But among them floated many a bird of evil omen—the hated Bramla kites, silent, slow, and dark, as if their plumes had been painted by the goddess of night.

Dr. McGee was on deck that same day shortly before sunset. This officer prided himself on his shooting. He now had a rifle and was for'ard at the bows.

"Benbow," he said, for that officer was near him, "do you see that black and ugly bird cleaving the air high up yonder?"

"Yes," said Benbow; "but don't shoot. It isn't lucky. On y," he added, "you may shoot if you like; you won't kill."

Bang went the surgeon's rifle.

The great bird wheeled over, struggled convulsively a moment in mid-air, then with wings all awry came whirling down and struck the water with a splash. And there it floated dead.

Not for long, though.

"Look ! look !" cried Colin, and, lo ! tearing through the water towards the bird, its dorsal fin and part of its blue-grey back above water, could be seen an immense shark. It had disappeared next moment, and with it the body of the Bramla kite. The doctor turned and walked aft.

Benbow paused a moment ; he took Colin by the arm.

"Do you see that strange cloud out yonder ?" he said.

"Rising up out of the sea like a great black rock ?"

"Yes," said Benbow ; "that means storm. We will need all the *Theodora's* good qualities before daylight comes again."

Colin felt a slight shiver run through his blood. He could not tell why.

"Some one is walking over my grave," he said.

Shortly afterwards the sun set.

His parting glance was an angry glare across the water, which was dyed a sulphurous red. And clouds banked up ; the waters grew grey and dark ; stars struggled out in the east, but were soon hidden by the quickly rising cumulus.

Then it was night.

The storm came on and roared apace through the empty sailless rigging. The course of the *Theodora* was altered, she was kept farther eastwards, for sea room was needed ; besides, this was their way southwards to seek for the mysterious stranger.

So the wind was nearly ahead, but the good ship plunged gallantly into it, and Benbow afterwards averred that she was making at least five knots an hour when the gale was at its worst, but being cross-questioned, he admitted that the wind had gone round a few points.

The wind had got up too soon for the waves to be high, but they were very rough. They seethed and they boiled under the bows, and the water often leapt on board in solid seas that came rushing aft, carrying everything loose along with them, and so lighting up the deck with their own phosphorescent foam that the bulwarks rising black at each side of them could be seen, and the rigging and masts, and even the men, though they merely looked like black shapes.

But the engines went labouring on with steady determined roar, and the great screw went round, sometimes so deeply immersed it sounded "drowned"—seafarers will know what I mean—and at other times, when the vessel was well down by the head, it rattled in the empty air.

But a great packet of letters had brought sunshine to the ship as they were leaving the harbour—sunshine fore and sunshine aft.

Who cared for storm or gale? Who cared for raging seas or rushing wind, when there was news from home?

XV.

BENBOW IN HIS GLORY—A BATTLE BY MOONLIGHT.

CHAPTER XV.

BENBOW IN HIS GLORY—A BATTLE BY MOONLIGHT

THE wind held, but by next day it had gone veering round, till at sunset it was almost right aft.

Benbow came on duty at eight bells with Colin as his midshipman. Benbow was in his glory again.

"Heave the log," he said to Colin.

When the line was stowed, Colin came back to Benbow and reported twelve knots.

"Twelve knots!" cried the sailing-master, rubbing his hands delightedly. "Ha! ha! ha! I knew the old *Theodora* could do it. Now, Colin McLeod, it is my plain unbiassed opinion that since the bottom of this ship was over-hauled and cleaned at Bombay she is double the individual that she was before. I verily believe she could do fifteen."

Colin laughed.

"Ah! you may laugh. But just cast your eyes above. What do you see?"

"A bright starlight night," said Colin, "with a clipping of a moon low down in the west."

"Bother all that! I mean what canvas?"

"Oh! not much. Close-reefed fore and maintop-sails, reefed foretop-gallant-sail, bit of jib. Not much else."

"Well now, out go some of those reefs."

"All right," said Colin.

"Hands make sail!"

"Eep—eep—eep—ee—ee—" went the boatswain's pipe.

"Away aloft!"

Benbow ran forward to where Colin was doing his duty.

"Carry on," he said, "for a bit; I'm going below, else we'll have the old man upstairs. He's a bit nervous."

Benbow skipped down to the captain's cabin, knocked, and peeped in.

"Just run down to tell you, sir, that I don't think the wind is quite so strong as it was, so I'm going to shake a reef out."

"All right, Mr. Benbow, thank you," replied Blunderbore, who was sitting on one chair with his legs on another. "But, I say, you know, I'd just as soon you'd left her alone, you know. There is no very great hurry to make a passage, and—Why, he's gone!"

So he was.

Captain Blunderbore turned uneasily in his chair.

"Bother that Benbow!" he said to himself; "I never

saw such a fellow for carrying on. I really thought we were snug for the night. Ah ! well, after all I suppose he does know what he is about, and the sooner we get south the better."

So Benbow had his own way. He heaved the log again, and it actually marked fourteen knots an hour by the glass.

Then this irrepressible officer's eyes were turned aloft. He was wondering if she wouldn't carry even more sail.

But at that very moment a fiercer gust of wind than usual came ; the *Theodora* gave a side-long plunge, righted again, and lifted. Then

" R—r—r—r—r—r—r ! "

Dear reader, imagine every one of these r's to be a nine-pounder gun, and all these nine-pounders to be fired in rapid succession, and you will have some faint notion of the noise that now took place up aloft.

One half of Benbow's sails were rent into ribbons.

The captain jumped up, and Mildmay and Gayly and West and McGee, down in the ward-room, looked at each other with consternation.

There was plenty of row now on deck ; but it gradually lulled, and by-and-bye the *Theodora* was easy once more ; but she did no more fast sailing that night.

" Anyhow, Gayly," said Benbow, next morning at breakfast, " I made her go, old man, and that is more than ever you did."

For Gayly had been chaffing Benbow.

The wind held for days, and the *Theodora* went rushing along on her course like a bird.

Winds of one kind or another were favourable, and in due time the equatorial calms were reached, and steam was got up.

A sea of glass, without a ripple, but a sea of molten glass, if you will pardon the simile. Great rolling smooth waves, a fiercely hot sun glaring down on them, and reflected from the glittering surface.

Everything on board now that could move kept rolling and tumbling about; there was no stability, no fixity of purpose about anything. There was no leeward, because there was no wind, and things that tumbled down to one side of the deck came tumbling back again next moment. And as to walking the decks, why no one could without staggering and reeling and clutching at things, as if under the influence of wine.

An awning was spread fore and aft, but it could give little comfort, for the sun's beams reflected from the waves were nearly as hot as those directed from above.

The ship was right away in the very centre of the Indian Ocean, too, so there was no land or sea breeze. So hot was it on deck that the pitch boiled, and the quarter-deck could not be kept clean and white, but looked all over patched with tarry feet-marks. Even Captain Blunderbore's stock of linen shirts went low, because he had to change three times a day. Fans

were in great requisition, and handkerchiefs looked as dark and dirty with frequent use as bicycle rags. Men were constantly fainting all day in the stoke-hole, and being hoisted up to breathe a purer air ; the doctor did nothing but manufacture aerated drinks ; and—would you believe it ?—while D'Austin seemed worn to a pale, aristocratic ghost, that “stupidnumerary” Brown got fatter and fatter, and Benbow assured his mess-mates he could see a difference in him every morning.

Nobody was sorry when the line was well crossed, the fires out, and the sails once more bellying out before the trades.

The *Theodora* went as far south as the Mauritius, then westward round the coast of Madagascar, and on towards the Zambesi river, but without meeting any vessel that at all tallied with the description received of the piratical slaver.

Nor was a cruise northwards to the Comoro Islands crowned with success.

“I believe,” said McGee, one evening in the mess, “that Gaspar is a thousand miles from us at this very moment.”

“Indeed, I shouldn't wonder,” said Mildmay. “But, doctor, as it is Saturday night, what say you to get out that old fiddle of yours and give the men a dance ?”

“Hurrah !” cried everybody

“I'm not in much form,” pleaded McGee, who really was an excellent performer.

"Well, then," said Benbow, "play yourself into form."

No sooner had McGee seated himself on a gun and commenced to tune up outside on the fighting deck than the floor was speedily filled. Every officer not on duty was there, and every man also.

Gayly's watch was on deck. It was a lovely starry night, with a gentle breeze blowing off the land, which was about ten miles distant. But a good look-out had to be kept "low and aloft," for there were many small islands about, and shoals as well, so men were constantly at work in the chains.

Gayly could hear all that was going on below, but he did not long to go down. Dancing to a single fiddle was far beneath Gayly's dignity.

McGee began with soft, dreamy waltzes, which reminded the dancers of home, but he soon went off into a rattling galop, and then the "fun grew fast and furious."

"Keep it up!" was the cry, and "Go it, old Saw-bones!" from Benbow, at which sally the men laughed uproariously.

And McGee did keep it up till his elbow ached and his fingers refused further duty.

Then after a pause a hornpipe was proposed.

Benbow himself would begin this fun, and no clog-dancer from Lancashire, or triple-shuffler from the land of coals, could beat Benbow. But he did not dance by himself long. Man after man joined the

rattling jig, and cut such capers, that before long the fiddle itself could hardly be heard for the laughter and encouraging shouts of the onlookers.

But hark! a shout on deck of quite a different sort.

A light away out seawards, broad on the weather-beam. Another moment, and the bugle was sounding to quarters, and every man Jack was standing armed by his gun.

In a few moments more the moon would rise. A broad belt of light in the east already heralded her approach.

Broader, and brighter, and lighter it got, then a red rim peered over the sea, and up and up came the moon, wondrous in size, glorious in its crimson splendour. But, lo! ere ever her lower limb had reached the horizon there glided into her, as it were, from the yellow haze beyond, a ship with every stitch of canvas set, and hung there for a moment or two like a picture in a frame. A long, low, full-rigged vessel with no great height of masts, but tremendous spread of cloth.

She passed, and still another vessel revealed itself against the moon's disc—a barque of much the same build.

If any doubt that both these vessels were pirates existed in the minds of the *Theodora's* officers it was soon dispelled, for they had suddenly altered their course and were soon bearing down towards the ship-of-war, with the evident intention of fighting.

The fires in the *Theodora* were banked, so, quickly as possible, the ship was put under steam, and sails taken in.

"If those ships are anything like well armed we've got our work cut out," said Mildmay to Captain Elunderbore.

Almost at the same moment a shot tore through the *Theodora's* rigging and carried away a stay. The battle had begun.

"Well hit!" cried Benbow. "Precious well hit! Why, those 'chaps will take some beating."

The *Theodora's* guns were run out and fired just as the *Castigo* came tearing past.

A shower of iron from the guns of the latter was the speedy response, and so close was she at the time that the *Theodora* heeled over to its fore till a broad band of her copper bottom showed over the water and gleamed in the moonlight. Had it been possible for the *Castigo* to have fired another broadside at that thin red line, the *Theodora* must speedily have sunk.

The *Castigo* forged ahead, and on came her consort, receiving and giving a like salute.

The marines here did excellent work, for, strange to say, all the barque's fighting men appeared to be crowded or huddled together on deck.

The *Castigo* could and did manœuvre well. She was about and back on the other tack almost before the *Theodora's* people had time to breathe. She was

evidently well commanded, and answered beautifully to her helm.

And so this moonlight battle went on. But it was soon evident that the *Theodora* was fighting at a disadvantage. A consultation was hastily held on the bridge, at which Mildmay was again present. This was during a kind of lull in the fight; something had occurred on board the *Castigo*, and she had sheered farther off.

"I would do that, sir, then, if I were you," said Mildmay, preparing to descend to the deck. "And yonder she comes again. Ram her and sink her, I say. If you fail, get alongside the consort and board her, good old fashion; you will thus, at all events, get clear of the *Castigo's* guns, for she will hardly dare to fire into her sister ship."

"Silence fore and aft!" cried Captain Blunderbore. "Steady as you go."

"Go ahead at full speed."

"Hard-a-port now. Round she comes."

"There she rips!" cried Benbow.

"Hard round—hard—hard."

Ah! Captain Blunderbore, your intentions were the best. Pity they should be baffled!

Gaspar himself commands the *Castigo*, and just as your iron bows are almost into her side, round goes her wheel, and you glide harmlessly past. But dreadful death is dealt from her quarter as you pass. See how your boats and bulwarks fly in staves and splinters

beneath that iron shower. Many men lie dead and bleeding, and even Benbow is wounded in the head.

"Only a scratch," he says, as he binds a handkerchief round his brow to staunch the blinding blood.

"Ready, boarders! Stand by with pistol, cutlass, and pike!"

Then a true British cheer goes up from the blood-wet decks of the *Theodora*. Hard at his ghastly work down in the smoke-filled cockpit, the doctor heard the shout; his Scotch blood

"Leaps in a' his veins,"

and he wildly responds, and even the wounded men wave feeble arms, and help to swell his ringing slogan.

Benbow, on the bridge, points with his sword to the on-riding vessel, and he looks all the hero as he does so.

"Yonder she comes!" he shouts, "Gaspar's consort! We'll have no more on-and-off fighting now, sir, shall we? Steady at the wheel! Easy starboard! Steady as you go! Well done! Hard-a-starboard! Bravo!"

"Boarders on deck!" cried the captain.

And while guns roar and splinters fly the vessels rasp side to side, and are speedily made fast.

"Away, boarders!"

High o'er the din of battle shrieks the bo's'ain's pipe.

"Away, boarders! Now, men, now!"

Benbow leaps on board the barque from the bridge;

Quentin and Colin board at the bow. They are close together—almost hand-to-hand.

Colin casts one glance at his more than brother. He can see he is saying something, but he can hear nothing.

The Arabs are taken aback. Spears are shivered by British cutlasses. Revolvers are ring-ring-ringing all along the deck. There are shouts and blows and dull, heavy thuds; there are shrieks and groans, the latter hardly heard. There is smoke and blood. Many of the *Theodora's* men slip and fall, but pull their enemies to the deck with them, so that here and there are terrible death-tussles, and more than one of the blue-jackets get up from beside a slain Arab only to stagger, and gasp, and fall dead by his side or across him.

Oh, reader! a battle at sea like that I am all too feebly trying to describe is an ugly sight, and one that hardly bears graphic detail.

Now victory belongs to the *Theodora*. The Arabs who are not *hors de combat* have leapt overboard or are driven below.

The *Castigo* knows her game is up. She has left her consort to her fate, and is now far away scudding along before the wind with stu'n sails "low and aloft."

Benbow is sitting, tired, and sick, and faint, on a hatchway. The doctor appears and leads him away.

Colin is standing with his back against the bulwarks, his dirk still in his right hand. The moonbeams are

shining full on his face, for his cap is gone. He is very pale; even his lips are white.

"I hope you're not hurt," says bold Quentin, coming up and looking anxiously at him.

"Not at all," returns Colin, with a faint made-sort-of-a smile.

"Not at all, but so tired."

Then down he drops—he has fainted. Poor boy, it was his first fight!

Duncan Robb had battled by his side all the time, though Colin did not know it, and more than once his cutlass had saved his master from an ugly thrust from Arab spear.

Big innocent Duncan, he too was among the wounded. He marched down to the cockpit, and took a seat in a far-away corner. Presently McGee went to him.

"Is it my turn?" he asked.

"Yes, my man; what is the matter?"

"Not *very* much, sir, but it is mighty painful; and I'm a kind of sick."

"Here, swallow that," said McGee, handing him a stimulant. "You're wounded in the hand, aren't you?"

"Little finger off," replied Duncan; "but I knocked off the Arab's head. Worse for him."

"Why, my poor fellow, one-half your little finger is clean gone."

"Not a bit of it," said the sturdy Scot, handing the surgeon something rolled up in a rag. "There it is

sir ; you can stick it on again, I have no doubt. Ha ! ha !" he laughed ; "it took me half-an-hour raking about to find it."

Dr. McGee laughed too. He really could not help it.

And honest Duncan's face fell, and tears actually rose to his eyes, when told that the little finger could not be stuck on again.

XVI.

*A BATTLE AND A CHASE—THE CORAL REEF—A
HURRICANE SQUALL—A FIGHT ON A CORAL
ISLAND.*



CHAPTER XVI.

A BATTLE AND A CHASE—THE CORAL REEF—A HURRICANE SQUALL—A FIGHT ON A CORAL ISLAND.

THE fight on board the barque had been exceptionally severe, and long before morning broke and the moon dipped towards the west it was evident the captured vessel could not be kept afloat.

The wounded and prisoners were therefore speedily removed, and, steaming off a little way, the *Theodora* lay by to see the last of her. She floated longer than any one could have imagined. She died hard. At eight bells in the morning watch she was still afloat, moving slowly through the water, with tattered sails, splintered yards and ropes, and rigging all awry.

"I think," said Mr. Mildmay, "it might be just as well to put that craft out of pain."

"I was thinking so myself," replied Captain Blunderbore.

But as he spoke, a puff of wind, almost a squall, came across the sea. For a time the barque could hardly be seen. When quite visible once more it was evident she was *in extremis*. She was taking weary lurches or

rolls from side to side ; finally the stern slowly sank, and she tipped up forward ; then the fo'c's'le flew up with a dull heavy report, and next minute she was dragged beneath, the bubbling waters closed over her, and the barque was no more.

It was a busy day that for the *Theodora*, and especially for Dr. McGee. The whole of both sides of the main deck was turned into a hospital. Cots were hung under canvas, and there the wounded were placed, the Arabs being treated with just as much kindness and attention as the British.

Nearly a month passed away. The *Theodora* had been to Zanzibar with her prisoners, and was once more back on her cruising ground between Comoro and Madagascar.

A good look-out was kept nightly for the piratical slaver. It was evident, from reports that had reached Captain Blunderbore's ears at Johanna, that she was still in these seas.

Men were constantly kept in the chains too, for the shoals in the sea and the coral reefs all round here are dangerous in the extreme, and but imperfectly laid down in the charts.

Late one evening a light was reported, and although it might be only that of another cruiser or an honest trader, the bugle at once sounded to quarters. It was clear and starry, as on the eve of the battle described in last chapter.

The light, however, disappeared as suddenly as it

had shone out, and nothing more was seen for fully an hour, when, to the surprise of every one, a ship under full sail was noticed coming down towards them like an avalanche.

"That's the *Castigo*," cried Benbow. "No ship on this coast can move like that but——"

The sentence was never concluded. The approaching vessel yawed for a moment; a line of fire and smoke ran along her black hull; then came thunder and a rain of shot that tore through the rigging and bulwarks of the *Theodora* and wounded more than one man.

The response was immediate from the war-ship, and it must have been a telling one. When the smoke cleared away the *Castigo*—for it was she—was seen still staggering and reeling and apparently almost unfit to proceed. There was time for the *Theodora* to almost rake her. But in the darkness probably little damage was done by the second broadside, and before another could be fired the *Castigo* was beyond range.

The brief battle now resolved itself into a chase. Away went the *Castigo* in a line with the shore, and the *Theodora* followed at full speed, firing every now and then with her bow gun.

"By all that is lucky," cried Benbow, wild with excitement, "we are gaining on the *Castigo*. See, sir, she is setting sail, and that last shot went slick into her stern."

A little sail was now clapped on the *Theodora*, which both steadied her and increased her speed.

But on went the *Castigo*, and it was soon evident that Barclay's shots were falling short.

The first lieutenant took several turns up and down the bridge, casting anxious eyes skywards. Strange to say, the clouds that were banking up and up, and blotting out the stars, were not coming from the same direction as the wind, but from nearly the opposite point of the compass.

On board the *Castigo* the pirate captain stood anxiously on his bridge. Hope in his breast was bounding very high now. He saw his enemy coming on after him, on and on to certain destruction, for both vessels were already on the edge of a reef, which the *Castigo*, with her light draught of water, might get over in safety, the *Theodora* never. This was the revenge which Gaspar Moravo had been planning and plotting for a month. There was hardly a mile of shoal water in the Indian Ocean or channel of Mozambique unknown to this old piratical slaver.

It was nearly or quite high water, too—the pirate had chosen his time well—so that if the *Theodora* struck there would be no higher tide to float her off.

Still the sky was becoming overcast, and what meant those ominous driftclouds so high up in the zenith?

No matter, no matter; it was now or never. Gaspar felt as he clutched the bridge-rail and glanced back in

the direction of his hated foe that he would be content to die if he could be sure of accomplishing the destruction of that ship.

"Eugenio," he said to his lieutenant, "in half-an-hour, if the wind holds, yon vessel will be hard and fast on these rocks, and when daylight comes we will but have to stand by and see them perish!"

"Your Excellency is right," replied Eugenio; "but still, capitano, I do not like the looks of the night. How dark and black it gets! I believe a squall is coming!"

"Stand by! Ready about!"

The wind went suddenly down; there was an ominous flapping of the sails.

A few drops of rain came pattering down on deck, as if the goddess Nox were shedding tears for the death and ruin so soon to follow.

Blacker and blacker grew the night. The ship rolled unsteadily, and seemed to quiver as if she were a living thing in fright, not knowing where to run, not knowing from which direction the danger was coming.

Gaspar himself rushed aft and stationed himself by the men at the wheel.

He turned the wheel himself a point or two. "Keep her there!" he cried; "one point off that means destruction to all on board!"

The sails continued to flap intermittently.

Then from over the sea came a low moaning sound like the roar of surf on a far-off shore.

The night grew blacker still; nothing could be seen

a yard ahead, and the light even from the binnacle and from the dead-eyes shot far up into the sky.

But see! yonder, on the near horizon, is a long white line; it comes nearer and nearer.

Then a flash of lightning darts quickly through the gloom, but the thunder that follows is never heard in the terrible roaring of the hurricane-squall that now sweeps downwards with a fury that cannot be described.

The *Castigo* is thrown on her beam ends, yet she rights again slowly and steadily; but, blinded by the surf and spray, the men at the wheel have for a moment lost command of her. For some time she goes tearing on before the awful squall, and next moment strikes with terrible violence on the very rocks to which she was trying to lead her enemy, the *Theodora*.

“To cling to slippery shrouds
Each breathless seaman crowds.”

In less than a minute, with a series of crashes, down go her masts, and the waves break on and over the doomed *Castigo*.

As suddenly as it came, so did it pass; both wind and sea went down, clouds drifted overhead still, but among them, ever and anon, stars could be seen.

“Eugenio!” cried Gaspar; “our vessel is lost! Have we boats enough left to take us away? The island of Pratto is but a short distance off. Can we manage?”

"We have boats enough," answered Eugenio, "to take away all the men we have left. Those terrible seas clean swept our decks."

"Then get them out. Death is welcome, if death *will* come, but we shall not be the prisoners of the cruiser. Man the boats.

"And now, Eugenio, if you are ready we will leave ; but first let us fire the ship, for not one timber of her shall fall into the hands of our enemies."

"Ay, and we will stand by to see her blaze, too."

In half-an-hour more the pirate ship was in flames from stem to stern ; then away shorewards went her boats.

They were hardly a mile away when the vessel blew up, scattering her burning beams and timbers across the water ; then all was silence and darkness once again.

Presently up rose the moon, silvering the few remaining clouds, and casting a broad belt of shining light across the water.

"A narrow shave for us," said Blunderbore, of the *Theodora*.

"A narrow shave indeed !" replied Benbow.

"Can any have escaped, think you ?" said Captain Blunderbore to Mildmay.

"I think it is highly probab'le there may be," was the reply ; "and if so they have ta'en refuge on yonder little island."

In a few minutes more five boats filled with armed

men were rapidly leaving the ship's sides and pulling straight for the island.

It was hardly a mile in circumference, but covered almost entirely with low trees and scrubby bushes, and quite an entanglement of wild creepers. The beach was of coral sand, and shone like silver in the clear moonlight.

The boats pulled round and round it, but never a sign of life was visible.

Gayly, however, who was in command of this little expedition, determined to wait till daylight and thoroughly search the place.

So the boats were drawn up, sentries placed, and a bivouac formed on the sands. And thus the night was spent.

Proof of the presence of the pirates on the island was found next morning early. They had attempted to conceal their boats, but in vain. These were soon pulled out and taken possession of; then search was commenced for the owners. It was found almost impossible, however, to penetrate into the interior of the island, which, according to Benbow's description, contained nothing but scrubby jungle and scrubbier snakes.

The *Thcodora*, lying at anchor about a mile off, was communicated with, and orders were received to fire the bush. This, it was believed, would bring the pirates down to the only piece of clear ground there was near the beach. The wood was accordingly fired, and in

less than an hour from end to end the island was a mass of flames and smoke.

But two whole hours went by, then three, and four, yet the pirates made never a sign. "Is it possible," Colin remarked to Benbow, "the wretches have perished in the flames?"

"Heaven forbid!" said Benbow; "it is too dreadful to think of."

Several blue-jackets and marines attempted to find their way into the interior, but were obliged to come back without having made any discovery.

"I have it," cried Benbow—"my little black rascal Othello; he's a Salamander; nothing can hurt him. We'll send him in."

"Good," said Gayly, laughing somewhat sarcastically; "if you think your Salamander can accomplish anything, you'd better signal for him."

A blue-jacket who had acted as signalman soon let them know on board the *Theodora* what was wanted. So soon after Othello came on shore in the dingy.

"Golly, massa!" he cried, rejoiced at being able to do a service. "I no hurt. De fire never lighted yet hot enough to burn Othello. Eut, sah! I not go into dat bush with my best close."

"No, certainly, Othello; it would really be a pity to spoil so splendid a suit."

Othello grinned from one of his big ears to the other, speedily commencing undressing, and when he had reduced himself to very scanty raiment

indeed, he received his orders, and off he went to reconnoitre.

A very bold little chap was Othello, and quite a "curio" in the way of niggers. Ever since his arrival on board the *Theodora*—Benbow had brought him from Sierra Leone—he had been a favourite with every one.

The tailor had earned for himself undying fame as a tradesman, by making Othello a suit of clothes that a duke's servant might have worn, had any duke's servant been small enough.

As for Othello, there certainly wasn't much of him. He was so small he could have gone to bed in the coal-scuttle, and so black that if you had opened the lid you wouldn't have seen him.

But he had created quite a sensation the first day he had entered the gun-room in those new clothes of his. It was just lunch-time.

"Ho! ho!" said Benbow; "the tailor has made your clothes, then?"

"Yes, sah! and they fits like a glove, sah. Dat am de ver' remark de tailor make hissef, sah."

"Stand up on that chair till we see you. Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Benbow, "what a caricature upon humanity! Why, my little Koh-i-noor, you're a regular black Jeames in miniature. Plush waistcoat, white tie, dress coat, knee breeches, and all!"

"Come down, Othello; come down, sir."

"I'se a-goin' to be call Othello; now, sah?" asked the blameless Ethiopian; "all dat long name, sah?"

"Yes, my boy. What did they call you at St. Helena?"

"Dey never called me nuffin. Dey allers kicked me, sah!"

Off went Othello then, and Benbow grew very anxious indeed as a very long time seemed to elapse, and still there were no signs of his reappearance, for Benbow really had considerable regard for his black mite of a servant.

But Othello returned at last. He came out with a rush and a run; the only garment he wore was a white one before he entered; it was black enough now; and his hands and feet and face were torn, burned, and bleeding. His story was simple and satisfactory enough.

"In de middle ob de bush," he said, "der am one big, big clearing. All roun' he am, dis clearing. No fire der, 'cause no bush der to burn. And der all de bad white men sit down. Dey had plenty sword, plenty spear, and dey no make much bobbery, only one small palaver, only one little sing song. All de same as dis, Massa Benbow."

Down on his knees on the coral sand went little Othello, with his face thrown forward and buried in his hands—the attitude of prayer used by the Arabs.

"Enough, my lad," said Benbow, kindly. "Get away on board again; I don't want anything to come over you."

"What does it mean?" said Quentin.

"It means," was Benbow's reply, "that those fellows are preparing for death, and will die with their swords in their hands."

"You're right, I believe, for once, Benbow," said Lieutenant Gayly.

"For once, yes, thank you."

And Benbow lifted his hat in mock courtesy to his superior officer.

It was getting on towards four bells in the afternoon watch, the men had dined on the beach, and both marines and blue-jackets were lying down beside their piled arms, laughing, joking, and talking as easily as they would have done on Southsea Common, when a wild shout was heard, and from the still smouldering jungle the foe leapt on them.

So quick was the onset that they had hardly time to form and fire a volley.

Then the fight went on hand to hand, a terrible *mêlée* with bayonets and clubbed muskets on the one side, with sword and spear on the other.

Gaspar Moravo and Eugenio, his lieutenant, were the first to fall. It seemed as though they actually courted death.

* * * *

Reader, as I wrote that last sentence my morning paper was laid on my study table, and pausing for a moment to open it (January 22nd, 1885), I read the account of the fierce engagement between General Stewart's troops and the wild hordes of the False

Prophet at the wells of Abu Klea. I can see it all in imagination, that fearful struggle against overwhelming odds; for well I know the fanatic fury of the Arab tribesmen.

* * * *

Nay, I will not finish the description of the fight on the sands of Praetto between the Arab pirates and our men of the *Theodora*.

But—no prisoners were taken. And side by side with the foe were stretched more than one brave blue-jacket and marine. And a cross marks their graves on that lonely isle of the ocean.

The little rough-hewn cross, generally of wood, sometimes even of stone, and always with rudely-carved initials, where is it not to be seen? Far away north on the surf-tormented shores of Greenland, draped in a mantle of snow and fringed with icicles; far away south on the stern and rocky coasts of Del Fuego, or the Cape; westward among the isles of the Pacific, and eastward on the coral islands of the Indian Ocean, half hidden at times in a wealth of creeping greenery and wild flowers, but always visible.

How that little cross speaks to the heart sailors alone know.

XVII.

*WARDROOM TALK AND GUNROOM CHAFF — ST.
HELENA—A PICNIC ON SHORE — THE MADCAP
GALLOP.*



CHAPTER XVII.

WARDROOM TALK AND GUNROOM CHAFF—ST.
HELENA—A PICNIC ON SHORE—THE MADCAP
GALLOP.

ABOUT two months after the events recorded in last chapter, and the expenditure of the usual amount of red tape at the Cape of Good Hope, and the writing home of many despatches and private letters as well, the *Theodora* was ordered round to St. Helena, there to lie and await further instructions.

Everybody was elated at the prospect of a change of scene, and there was plenty of laughing and talking, both fore and aft, at the fo'c's'le-head, in galley, in stokehole even, hot though it was, in gunroom and wardroom, and even in the captain's cabin, for Captain Blunderbore loved society.

The *Aurora*—the old *Roarer*—had been sent off before them. The *Theo's* officers would be delighted to meet them again, and as their vessel neared the island there was a deal of talk in the mess about the commodore's ship and her fellows.

"Of course," said McGee, "we'll give a party of some kind?"

"A dance!" suggested West.

"Why, West," exclaimed Benbow, elevating his brows in surprise, either feigned or real, "has the pea-soup gone to your head?"

"It does seem funny," replied West, smiling, "but the fact is, Benbow, Dr. McGee has advised me to go in for plenty of exercise, dumb-bells, dancing, and all kinds of capers, else I'll get so stout, he says, that I won't be able to get in at my cabin-door."

"Or down the ladder," said Mildmay, laughing, "like Commander Romeike. You knew Romeike, Benbow?"

"That I did. One of the best fellows out. Such a rare one to tell a good story; kept you laughing for hours, all through dinner and dessert, in fact, but never laughed himself."

"Well," continued Mildmay, "Romeike applied for the *Cleaver*, an iron storeship that was fitting out at Pembroke for Bombay. The appointment was made, and Romeike was a happy man. He always said he liked a separate command. He didn't join till the vessel had up steam and was preparing to go out of harbour on a trial trip. His servant had seen to his traps, and everything was all ready, but didn't the ladder creak as he was getting on board!"

"Let me see," put in Mr. Benbow. "How much did he weigh? Fifty-six stone, wasn't it?"

"Now then, Benbow," said McGee, "you're drawing the long bow; don't."

"Well," continued Mildmay, "Romeike actually weighed twenty hundred-weight."

"That is a ton," said West, quietly; "what a Jumbo he must have been!"

"No, no, no," cried Mildmay; "I mean twenty stone; it is this countryman of yours, McGee, who is confusing me, this gunroom servant; he is sticking a dish of potatoes in front of my nose. I tell you, Duncan Robb, that in this country people don't hold potatoes in their fingers, nor do they eat them with soup. But, gentlemen, Romeike saw to getting the ship well clear before he thought of going below; indeed, he stayed on deck for hours. Then he asked the doctor to come below to his cabin and see his arrangements."

"'Go down first, doctor,' said Romeike, with a suspicious glance at the companion ladder.

"Down the doctor slipped, like an eel; he was an active wee man. The doctor slipped down, but the commander stuck fast by the hips, and they do say they had to rig a block and tackle to hoist him up again. Anyhow, he never again ventured to try his luck in that hole. Forward it was no better, and he would have had to remain on deck all the voyage if the carpenter and armourer had not succeeded in rigging a special ladder for him at the main hatchway."

Now James Town, St. Helena, where they soon after arrived, is a pretty little town; from the beach it goes straggling away up through a glen in a thoroughly romantic kind of style; rocks and forts

frown over it, to say nothing of the grand old hills, and along the seaside is many a charming villa, with porticoes and verandahs, and creeping plants and flowers of every hue. And from rose-covered balconies on moonlit nights comes the dulcet sound of guitar or lute accompanying sweet girlish voices singing. Often of an evening, when tender-eyed stars were shining, and fire-flies flitting from bush to bush, have I lazily floated in my skiff, listening dreamily to the music that trembled on the waves 'twixt me and the shore.

There was hardly a villa there I had not woven the web of a story round, hardly one I had not encircled with the glamour of romance.

Yes, a nice wee place is James Town, only—well, it is a little dull. But *two* man-o'-war ships lying before it at the same time! What a joyful sight! I can assure you, reader, that the day after the *Theodora's* arrival, soon after sunrise, many a blind was drawn a tiny bit to one side, and many a bright eye gazed seaward.

The gallant blue-jackets, and the officers in white and blue and gold that came on shore so frequently during the day, were objects of great attraction. Many of the latter brought introductions, so that the *Aurora's* and *Theo's* people in a day or two, socially speaking, had the freedom of the town presented to them. They could drop into this place or that, lunch and take tea, and lounge and talk as long as they pleased. The officers of the garrison were a set of good-natured,

easy-going fellows, else they might have been piqued and jealous at being ousted, as they now were, in favour of the sailors.

It was a lovely morning, and early. How bright and sparkling the sea was! How blue the sky! Quentin and Colin were walking the deck.

"Breakfast is ready and waiting," said sturdy Duncan, coming up and saluting the young officers.

At that moment, on the quarterdeck of the *Aurora*, or the *Roarer*, as the blue-jackets insisted on calling the corvette, the band struck up the National Anthem, and, as if with one impulse, both Quentin and Colin lifted their hats. The effect of the music of the grand old lines coming floating over the water on this bright, calm day was spirit-stirring in the extreme. And handsome, too, looked the corvette herself, lying so peacefully on the water, with her long black hull gently rising and falling, the white line of hammocks over the bulwarks, and the rigging square and taut.

"It's going to be a day on shore, isn't it?" said Colin, as the two went below to breakfast.

"I believe so," replied Quentin Steele.

"How jolly!" cried Colin, jubilantly.

Both of these young officers had already done ladder-hill again and again, and their legs ached in consequence, as if they were threatened with rheumatics. It is no joke, I can assure the reader, running or even walking up this giant staircase. It goes right up the face of a precipitous cliff that rises over the pretty

little town of St. James—a wall of adamant. A fort stands at the top of the cliff, and to get at it in any other way would entail a walk of about two miles round, so all but the aged and infirm go up the ladder. There are about four hundred steps, and as each step seems fully a foot higher than the one below it, it is not any wonder one needs to pause for breath when half-way up, but here there is a seat.

Benbow was in fine form in his own mess that morning. It may be noted, however, that as a rule Benbow was always in fine form, whether in his own or in any other mess. Benbow suffered from no constitutional shyness, he was invariably on good terms with himself, and this made him feel on good terms with every one else.

As to the wound in his head, Benbow confessed it did him more good than harm. "It let out a little of the bad blood," he said, "and I feel all the lighter for it."

"Now then, Duncan," cried Benbow, as he entered the gun-room and began squeezing himself up to his place, for the midshipmen's mess was certainly not as big as Guildhall, and Benbow being the last to enter, everybody else was seated. "Bring the breakfast, Duncan. Boys, make room for your father! Here, you boy Brown, what are you grinning at? I won't permit a stupid-numerary to grin at me, I can tell you! I'm thirty years of age, mind you, and I'm not going to be thirty years of age for nothing!"

"I wasn't grinning, sir," began the poor middy; "I was——"

"Don't prevaricate, sir!" interrupted Benbow. "Ask a blessing!"

"Now, Duncan, off lids! What! curry and rice, and a 'spatch' cock and soft tack and butter! Duncan, you're worth twenty of that Portuguese chap that so narrowly escaped being shot. Duncan, you're an invaluable fellow! Colin McLeod, your countryman is a treasure! You look rather white yet, though, Duncan. Do you miss your little finger very much?"

"Not so very much. It has healed nicely. I've only got to hold it up as much as I can, sir."

"That's right, Duncan; keep it up; and if you hold up your head also you'll never die. I declare there is that stupid 'numerary grinning again! Just look at him! Why, he's all mouth! He looks at you with his mouth, and shuts his eyes when he laughs for fear of catching cold in them. Brown, have you any brothers? No? Good thing, Brown; one o' your sort's enough in a family. Some more curry, Brown? That's a man! Eat and get stout. By-the-bye, Brown, nobody seems to have seen you on deck at all during the row with that pirate. Did you draw your dirk at all, Brown?"

"Oh yes, sir, I drew it."

"About all you did do, I daresay. But heave round with your breakfast."

By-and-bye there was a smart knock at the door,

and the quartermaster's head appeared beneath the curtain.

"Cutter just called away, gentlemen."

"Thank you," cried Benbow. "Now, then, you youngsters, if you're going on shore, off with you and tumble into your mufti. Brown, my warlike little pumpkin-squash, are you going with us? Yes? Well, go and dress. I've never seen you in plain clothes. I know I shall be delighted with your appearance. Duncan, you're to bring our gunroom basket on shore; you'll get plenty of niggers in the town to carry it to Longwood."

"It's all ready packed, sir."

"Well, I trust it is well filled with good things, Duncan. We must keep up the dignity of the gunroom mess, you know."

"By-the-bye, Brown," continued Benbow, when the boat had shoved off, "that plaid suit becomes you admirably. Fits like a glove. Jacket-tails stick out a trifle, and legs of trousers are a trifle too short. But that's nothing. Ever served in the tropics before, Brown?"

"No, sir; coast of Ireland chiefly."

"The Green Isle, eh? Well, that accounts for a considerable amount of your charming vividity. Now, Brown, you're fond of natural history. There, don't deny it; I can see it in your eyes, or at least in your mouth. Starboard a little, cox'ain. Look, Brown, do you see that lovely little airy, fairy, sky-blue object

floating along on the water, rising and falling on the waves like a thing of beauty and a joy for ever, eh ? ”

“ Yes,” cried Brown ; “ what ever is it ? ”

“ That, my dear young friend, is a nautilus, called by the ordinary blue-jacket a Portuguese man-of-war.”

“ Is it alive ? ”

“ That it is, bless your innocence.”

“ Then I should like to catch a specimen.”

Benbow gave the coxswain a wink.

“ Keep the boat down towards it,” he told him. “ Stand by, Brown, to pick it up as soon as it comes under the quarter.”

Brown tucked up his sleeves, and stood by as advised, and so sooner did he have a fair chance than he seized the frail thing.

“ I shan’t miss it,” he had told Benbow before he made the plunge.

Well, he did not miss it, and most assuredly the nautilus did not miss him. Brown flung it from him as if it had been a hornet. He got suddenly red in the face, and compressed his lips as if trying to keep from crying.

“ Poor boy ! ” said Mildmay, smiling ; “ those things *do* sting. Be careful next time. Let it be a lesson to you. Never tackle an enemy until you have some notion what guns she carries.”

There was not a cloud to-day in the sky, but once up among the hills, a gentle breeze fanned the travellers’ faces and tempered the sun’s rays. To their right lay

hills above hills, the lower parts cultivated, the upper green with waving trees, while above them towered the lofty peak of Diana. Bare and craggy, and nearly three thousand feet above the level of the sea, this mountain has been a landmark for the sailor for centuries, and mayhap will be for ages yet to come.

The tomb of the Great Napoleon was faithfully visited, then the beautiful villa on the cliff-top where he had been a prisoner so long, and where he died.

As they all stood together in the lofty room, with its bare whitewashed walls, in which Napoleon had breathed his last, a feeling of depression almost akin to gloom stole over them, and no one was sorry when they were once more out on the breezy cliff, with the blue sea, dotted with many a white sail, far down beneath them, stretching away, and away, and away to the illimitable horizon.

A glorious day was spent roving among the hills and rocks. Benbow, Colin, and Quentin got to the top of the peak, and the view well repaid them. Mildmay, with D'Austin and Stupid-numerary Brown, as Benbow would call him, remained below and did not know the treat they had missed.

On their return Duncan's basket was called into requisition, and ample justice was done to the good fare there. Certain it is, that lying around there, beneath that green tree's shade, everybody seemed very contented and very happy. The sun sank lower and lower towards the horizon; nobody appeared to mind it,



"FROM THE TOP OF THE PEAK THE VIEW WELL REPAID THEM." [Page 254.]



or even notice it. Captain West showed his sketches, Colin and Quentin brought out the ferns they had collected, and last, but not least, Middy Brown exhibited his shells.

"Conchologist, are you, Brown?" cried Benbow. "Bother me if I don't think there is something in the boy after all. Mildmay, tell us a story."

Mildmay did as requested. Then Benbow spun a yarn a yard long at least, a yarn that made every one laugh. For Benbow's yarns had this peculiarity, nobody but himself could have told them half so well; there was something funny in the little man's face, something right merry in the twinkle of his little bright eyes that caused you to wait and listen even when the story was flagging, sure in your own mind that the fun was to follow, and you never were disappointed.

When Benbow had finished he called on the doctor for a song, and "Ye Banks and Braes" was the immediate consequence.

Next there was a sea-song with a chorus that made you imagine you were being tossed on the bosom of the heaving ocean, now down in the trough of the sea, with the wave-walls rising up on each side of you, now away up high, high on the crest of a mighty billow. This was Quentin's contribution to the general jollity.

Then Colin's turn came.

Colin had a sweet tenor voice, though neither strong nor deep, but his song was much appreciated. It led his listeners far away from the scene around them, far

away to their island home ; it breathed of innocence and rural beauty, of throistles fluting in the limes, of larks singing high o'er fields of tender green, of winds that sighed through summer trees, of plough-boys, of milkmaid's song—all, all of home.

There was an interval of fully a minute, during which no one spoke. Each was wrapped in thought. Then Colin looked around him and smiled upon Brown.

Brown coloured up, and looked most interestingly shy.

"Come, come," cried Benbow, pretending to look severe, "there is no use in trying to get out of it, Mr. Brown. Duty is duty."

"Duty?" said Brown, in some surprise.

"Yes, certainly."

"Oh! I hadn't looked upon it in that light before, so here goes."

Very much to the astonishment of everybody, a comical kind of a smile commenced to play around Brown's by no means classical features, while he quietly dived his hand into his pocket and fetched out a pair of bones—real negro-minstrel bones.

Mildmay was looking at him somewhat regretfully. He was wondering if the poor boy, as he called him in his own mind, meant making a fool of himself.

But Stupid-numerary Brown was quite as self-possessed now as he had formerly appeared confused.

"It's the correct thing, you know, gentlemen...," he

said, "to take your music with you when invited to a party where you may have to sing a favourite song. Them's my moosic."

"Oh! you can look at them, gentlemen," he added, handing them round. "Look at 'em, feel of 'em, convince yourselves there is no deception."

"Bravo! Brown," laughed Benbow, encouragingly.

"And did you really bring these to sea with you?" asked Mildmay, smiling.

"Yes, sir," replied Brown, pretending to look solemn. "Nobody in our family could play on 'em except me. Takes an artist to play the bones, though any fool can fiddle, sir. Marvellous what can be done on the bones, sir! At home, sir, I used to call the cows, and frighten away the stray cats, and scare the rats, and, better still, sir, whenever our baby began to squall my mother would say, 'Tommy, my boy, come and beat them bone things,' and the dear infant would smile and go off to sleep in an ecstasy. Bless you, yes, sir, there is moosic in the bones. Now, gentlemen, just listen, and you'll hear the night express starting north from Euston Square to take the letters to Colin McLeod's father. Any more going? Right for'ard! Whew—w—w! Now she's off."

Puff—puff—puff—went the bones, it really was marvellous; quicker—quicker—quicker, till the sound settled into a steady roar. Louder and harsher now the express is going over a long iron bridge; once more the steady rattling roar; now she is going through

a cutting ; now she is out again, and away across the clear country. Whew—w ! She is entering a tunnel, and now she is in it, and the roar is subdued and dreamy ; then it suddenly increases ; she is clear of the tunnel, and soon after begins to slow, and slow, and slow, till she pulls up at——

“ York, gentlemen,” says Brown, and sits down.

The applause that followed would have been enough to turn the head of an actor on any stage. Mildmay felt so pleased, and patted Brown kindly on the shoulder.

From that day forth Brown with his bones was quite a favourite in the gunroom, and even the wardroom mess ; and little Othello, the blameless Ethiopian, and he gave many a humorous entertainment.

There was a “big” dinner on board the *Roarer* that night, to which the *Theodora’s* fellows were invited. The table was laid on the main or fighting deck under canvas lined with flags. It was quite a family affair between the two friendly ships, no strangers being on board, so all the talk at table was about the service. This after-part of the main deck was screened off from the fore, and the band played outside.

After dinner the officers strolled up and down the deck in twos and threes, conversing and listening to the sweet music.

Now, I have often been amused on board ship at scenes like what I am about to describe suddenly taking place. It seems to happen by magic, but the

music has a good deal to do with it. On this occasion the band suddenly struck up the "Madcap" Galop, and in a moment more, Quentin, with Colin as partner, was whirling round to it; then Stupid-numerary Brown and a *Roarer* middy as plump and shapeless as himself started; even D'Austin for the time being forgot his *bon ton*, and found a partner; big McGee and West sailed together, and there were four more couples of the *Roarer's* officers at least to join this Madcap Galop.

But this wasn't all, for away for'ard, behind the dividing screen, every man-Jack, from the cook to the Krooboys, went at it with a will, and for the time being you might have imagined all hands had been bitten with the mythical tarantula, so fast and furious was the dancing.

Then the music suddenly ceased, and decorum was once more resumed, but poor West was fain to drop almost helpless into a chair. He was far too fat for tripping it in this way.

Colin was very happy that evening, but sorrow was even then winging its way towards him.

XVIII.

*LENT TO A GUNBOAT—ROUGHING IT IN THE SER-
VICE—COLIN'S TRIALS BEGIN.*

CHAPTER XVIII.

LENT TO A GUNBOAT—ROUGHING IT IN THE SERVICE—COLIN'S TRIALS BEGIN.

EARLY next morning Captain Blunderbore sent for Colin.

He was seated at breakfast with a bundle of letters before him—despatches had come in a few hours before in the gunboat *Whitterit*.

"Come away, Mr. McLeod, and sit down; I have something here that interests you."

The captain talked in a very kind tone of voice, and poor Colin's heart throbbed violently to hear it. Why should he speak to him thus? He seldom did so. What could it mean? He had not yet had his own letters from home. Was his mother dead? or his father, brother, or uncle?

"No bad news?" he asked. "No bad news, I trust, sir?"

"My dear lad, no! In fact, it ought to be very good news for you; only we'll all be sorry to lose you."

"It is grief of some kind, then," thought Colin.

"Bad news?" continued the captain. "No; to a

youngster like you it ought to be the best of news, though you'll have to rough it in the little *Whitterit*."

Colin's face fell ; he was going away from the good old *Theodora* ; from Mildmay, whom he loved so well ; from his "brother" Quentin, and the best of mess-mates.

He could not help a sigh escaping him.

The captain looked at him kindly.

"Keep up your heart, my lad," he said. "You're *not appointed* to the *Whitterit* ; you're only going to be *lent* for a year. Poor young Ruskin died on the passage out."

A few minutes after Colin was hurrying below to his mess to tell the fellows the news.

"Ha, ha !" cried Benbow, slapping Colin on the shoulder in his usual hearty mirthful manner. "Going to be lent ! going to become a stupid-numerary. Ha, ha !" But Benbow added, more seriously, "Well, well, Colin ! we'll all miss you. Good luck to you ! and soon may you return."

The *Whitterit* was to sail in a week. She was going straight away across the Atlantic southward and westward ho ! to call with letters and despatches at Buenos Ayres, and then to run round to the coast of Peru, on somewhat serious business—namely, to make private inquiries concerning an alleged insult to our flag by the Peruvians.

It was a duty that required some tact as well as diplomacy, and in appointing Lieutenant-Commander

Channing to the *Whitterit* the Lords of the Admiralty thought they had the right man in the right place. Perhaps they had; he was a smart officer, as we shall see.

She was to sail in a week. How quickly that week fled away!

And that last night in the little gunroom mess—why, Colin could not have believed he could have felt so “foolishly sad,” as he called it. But he could not keep his heart up. He laughed at Benbow’s yarns and jokes mechanically; he listened to Brown with his bones, and little nigger Othello; but he did not laugh, as he used to, till the tears came in his eyes. If tears had come to-night they would have been tears of quite another sort.

But the evening passed away somehow, as evenings will whether we be sad or gay.

“Lights out, gentlemen, please.”

It was nine o’clock. It was the quartermaster’s voice.

“Shall we ask for another hour?” said Quentin.

“No,” replied Colin; “let us go on deck.”

So on deck the two went together, and what a deal they had to talk about and say to each other, to be sure! But with all this we have nothing to do.

It was seven bells before they parted, Quentin to get ready for his watch on deck, Colin to turn in.

It was hours before he slept, though; and when he did sleep it was only to dream strange, confused, wearisome dreams, with little meaning in them, perhaps,

but very harassing nevertheless. He was back home again in the dear old favourite parlour in his father's castle; it was a lovely summer's evening; in at the open window floated the vesper song of the robin, the pink-pink, and thrush, mingling with the low whirring sound of partridges in the corn. His mother was quietly knitting; his father, in his easy-chair, reading the paper; his uncle, Captain Peter, walking up and down the floor as if it were a quarter-deck. Suddenly his mother raised her face, and Colin saw she was weeping. Then all was dark, and the scene changed. He was toiling up inaccessible mountains and across interminable moorlands, with some definite object, he knew not what, with some burden weighing him down that he could not shake off. And now he was in the midst of a deep, dark forest, lost, for there was never a path and never a mark to guide him through it, and the trees seemed endless in multitude. But he found himself at long last by the brook—the old brook-side. Oh, it was his own dear old forest after all, and here—yes, here—was the Latin grammar! He must master his gerunds—his gerunds in *dum* and his gerunds in *do*. Yet he had never, never felt them so difficult before. Why should a voice from the forest sing out, "All's well!" in that mournful voice? He was partly awake now; it was the sentry's call.

He slept again, and once more the scene was changed, he was on the wide, wide ocean now, alone, it seemed, and in a boat—alone, yet not alone; forms appeared

around him, with him ; there was no wind either, but the boat heaved up and down, up and down, in a strange mysterious kind of a way, which he could not understand ; and hark ! was that not the sound of waves breaking on a sandy beach not far off ?

"Hullo ! old man," cried Quentin ; "why, it's five bells."

Colin sat up in his hammock and laughed.

"So it was you swinging my hammock after all, was it ? But you made me dream, and the marines are scrubbing decks overhead ; that was the sound of breaking waves I heard. Well, it is funny. I'll be up in a minute."

"All right," said Quentin ; "I'm not going to turn in. I've had an hour all standing. Come soon, and we'll have a talk before breakfast."

"So much for dreams," thought Colin ; "if I were superstitious now——"

He really was slightly so, though he would not own to it. Nearly all Highland boys are, and the inhabitants of most wild mountain lands.

Colin could not shake off the feelings his dreams gave rise to.

He was going away to-day, to his new quarters ; that in itself was enough to make the poor boy sad—for boy he was, though it really seemed many, many years since he left his home.

He remained on his knees a much longer time this morning, beside his sea-chest, than usual, and he found

comfort. Oh the comfort one has in knowing that wherever he may be, in the lonely wilderness or far away on the ocean, in storm or danger, or amid pestilence, the great Father is ever near him to appeal to, to comfort him !

Colin found comfort in mind, but there was an oppressed feeling of body, born of his restless night and weary dreams, that he was unable to shake himself clear of. He went on deck and had a sailor's douche. Captain West was there also, early though it was. It was part of the *régime* he was undergoing under Dr. McGee's instructions, by way of holding in check his growing obesity.

A sailor's douche ? What is it ? you ask. Oh, it is great fun ; you go up when the men are washing down the decks, and have the hose played all over you. The donkey engine sends the water, too, with such force that it is quite a difficult matter to speak. Just listen to three lines of the conversation between West and Colin on this particular morning. Two hoses were being used, and at this moment one was turned on West, the other on Colin.

"Hullo, Colin, my—augh—my—bo—hoy—so you're—augh—augh—go—ing away to-day, are you ?"

And Colin replies,

"Aaugh—augh—yes—sir—and right sorry I—augh—augh—am for—augh—it."

"Isn't this a—augh—augh—a glorious—augh—bath, my bo—hoy !"

"Yes—sir—it is—ough—ough — splendid." And more to the same purpose.

Colin's sea-chest was lowered over the port side of the *Theodora* that same forenoon, and he himself soon went down after it, and seated himself on top of it, for the boat was a whaler, and she was laden fore and aft. But it did look funny, seeing him going off thus, and gazing back, somewhat sadly it must be confessed. The *Whitterit* was anchored nearly a quarter of a mile from the *Theodora*. Colin got leave from his commander to spend the evening with his old mess-mates, and he dined in the wardroom.

Benbow, as usual, was full of chaff, Mildmay happy-looking and affable. This good officer never permitted himself the latitude of chaff, a good deal too much of which goes on in the service; but he dearly liked to listen to, and join in, pleasant conversation.

Young Brown and Quentin dined with the rest in the wardroom.

Benbow never did spare poor Brown.

"But bless you, sir," he said to Mildmay this evening, "I've hopes of the boy yet. A boy that can perform as he does on the bones is bound to make an admiral. That's Benbow's opinion. Pity he is so fat. Beg your pardon, West."

West laughed.

"You make matters worse," he said, "by apologising."

"Colin, dear lad," he continued, "I don't know how

the old *Theodora* will get on without you. But, I say, old man, you did look funny perched on top of that sea-chest of yours. Put me in mind of What-is-his-name's picture, you know, of the dog in the flood, floating away on top of his kennel. You looked just as pitiful."

There was a general laugh at this, and Colin looked half vexed, for which Mildmay was sorry, and remonstrated with the navigating lieutenant.

"Don't be too hard, Benbow," he said; "it's the last night."

"That's just the thing," replied Benbow, "just the reason I want to cheer the boy up. It's the last night, and we may not see him again, *for you ken, sir, Scotchmen never gang back.*"

"No," said McGee; "you English chaps couldn't get on without us."

Colin smiled. He had his answer also.

"No," he said, quietly; "you're right. Scotchmen never gang back; they never gang back—in a promise, they never gang back in their word, they never gang back if they meet a foe. They didn't gang back at Bannockburn, Benbow, did they? I almost forget, but if my memory serves me it was the other party that suddenly remembered they had an engagement down south."

Everybody was pleased at this sally, for though he was well liked on board, Benbow was so constantly chaffing other people that nobody was sorry when he had his own toes trodden on.

Lieutenant Mildmay went on shore with Colin after dinner to stretch his legs, as he called it. They went early, about eight o'clock. But the moon was well up, and the hills and braes and the little town itself seemed to slumber beneath the gauze-like veil it had drawn over them. Only the fort stood out bold and clear, and the far-off peak of Diana, while all the sea was a-shimmer in the golden light. It was, as Byron says, "a goodly night."

"Now for a good walk," said the lieutenant. "I feel young again, my lad, when I get my legs on the solid land. One has no more exercise on board a ship than a bird has in a cage. What say you to get right away up the hill, and half-way to Longwood?"

"Just what I should like," replied Colin.

Away they went side by side, youth and manhood, the sailor youth and his sea-daddy. And really Lieutenant Mildmay had been all a sea-dad to Colin. He had been to him everything that his uncle Peter could have wished him to be, and, if the truth must be told, there was more in Mildmay's wish for a walk to-night than the simple stretching of his legs. For he wanted to have a parting word with Colin.

They sat down together on the edge of a rock, the town far beneath them, and away beyond the moon-gilded sea and the ships, with their port lights only half visible, so bright was the moonlight.

When they rose to go,

"Well," said Mildmay, "you'll do as I've told you,

I know. And I have a strange presentiment you will find my daughter. The *Theodora* may be round Lima way. We are on special service, ready to go anywhere, but we may never go that length."

"I'll do what you've told me, sir, and I've you to thank for all I know of service. I just feel now as if I were going out into the world again—alone. I'm sure I shall not be happy. But I'll try to be so."

"No, you mustn't try. Remember the words of President Nott, 'Don't *try* to be happy. Happiness is a shy nymph, and if you chase her she will fly from you. But go quietly on and do your duty, and she will come to you.'"

"I'll do my duty, sir."

"I know you will, boy. And now let us go below."

* * * * *

The happiness and comfort of the officers and crew of a ship in the service depend in a very large degree upon its commander.

We know by this time what sort of a person Captain Blunderbore was: by no means a very dashing character, sometimes apt to be cross or snappish, but withal simple-minded and good at heart. Commander Channing* was an officer of quite another sort. Happily there are few like him in the Royal Navy. But there are some at least, and—who knows?—they may do

* Commander Channing is sketched from life. His prototype has left the service, but old messmates of mine who read this story will remember him.

good indirectly, for those who have to serve under them soon come to know that life in the navy is not all *couleur de rose*, and so they learn to do their duty even under difficulties.

Being transposed to a small gunboat like the *Whitterit* was a sad trial for Colin. Bad boy that he was, I fear he went on board her with no very amiable feelings.

Well, it was a great change for him. His career in the service had been but a short one, it is true, but it was also a happy one, and the ships he had served in were both large and comfortable.

The *Whitterit* was a sturdy little gunboat, but she was wondrous small. Her armament was but three guns; a man with long legs could have stepped easily from the thwart of a boat on to her deck.

Nevertheless she was very fleet. She was built for speed, and had been employed previous to her present commission as a despatch-boat on different stations.

Her gunroom was her wardroom; abaft this was the commander's cabin.

Colin's new messmates would be but three, the surgeon, a junior lieutenant, and an assistant paymaster.

Much to our hero's horror, he found that the whole vessel was overrun with gigantic cockroaches. The *Whitterit* had been home, it is true, but not long enough to get rid of these awful pests. With the

exception of the clerk, the others, including the commander, had been "shipmates" with these unsavoury creatures before. So Colin was laughed at when he expressed his loathing of such questionable companionship the first night. It was during one of their periodical rushes, when they crowd out suddenly almost as thick as locusts, covering the bulkheads almost black. On these occasions they are literally in thousands—I might say tens of thousands. One or two of these monsters flew against Colin's face and neck, and he shuddered at the contact.

Before he was three days at sea he discovered there were worse things than cockroaches on board this merry wee *Whitterit*—scorpions, to wit. Old sailors think nothing of these, or even of centipedes, but Colin was not yet hardened to them.

So great was his dread of these creepy-creepies that for nights and nights he hardly slept a wink, and when he did, he awoke with a start and a half-frightened scream. He was ashamed of himself, but he could not help it.

About a week after Colin had joined the *Whitterit* the weather became very boisterous indeed; she had been under sail nearly all this time. Nor was any attempt made to ease her when it came on to blow. Considering the strength of wind and the awful force of the seas that tumbled on board with the weight of avalanches, the *Whitterit* was really doing very well indeed. But she almost lived under water. Neither

officers nor men were ever dry on deck, while down below everything was as comfortless as it well could be. The little wardroom was nearly always dark, and the green seas washing across the skylight windows had a most depressing effect upon the nerves.

Colin had to keep watch at night without either oilskin or sou'-wester—the latter is most useful—so he was always drenched to the skin. One night he turned into his hammock quite cold as well as wet; indeed, his teeth were chattering.

Next morning he was in a fever, head aching, eyes and skin burning, but cold withal. He would have got up, but the surgeon advised him to go on the sick-list.

"I'll try," said the doctor, "to make it all right with the commander."

Colin looked at the surgeon's serious face in mute surprise.

The doctor answered the look. "You're astonished," he said, with a kind of forced laugh, "that I should talk thus."

"Our Dr. McGee," replied Colin, "was master of his duties, master of himself, and master of his patients."

"Perhaps," replied the surgeon, colouring slightly; "but our commander is master here, and monarch of all he surveys. I'm sorry—it isn't my fault, and I don't think perhaps he means to be harsh, but he is, and I shan't be sorry when I quit the little ship."

"I'll do my duty," said Colin, with sparkling eyes, "and then I fear no one."

The doctor laughed. "Your duty at present," he said, "is to lie there."

Then he went on deck. Two hours afterwards he came back. He was almost pitched headlong into the steerage where the hammock hung, and a great green sea followed him.

"The captain," said the doctor, "insists upon seeing you. Is it possible, think——"

Before he had finished his sentence Colin had swung himself on to the deck, and stood there swaying about and holding on by the hammock-lashings.

When the ship steadied a little more he managed to reach his sea-chest and dressed, and in a few minutes more was in the commander's cabin. By no means an unpleasant face had the commander, but there always hovered around his mouth, when talking to his inferior officers, a sarcastic, unbelieving kind of a smile.

"So, Mr. McLeod," he said, with a laugh, "the weather is rather bad for you? Gone on the sick-list, eh?"

"Sir," replied Colin, "Dr. Johnson put me on the list because I feel ill."

"Feel ill, eh? Well, let me tell you this, youngster: you don't look ill, and I'll have no malingering on this ship while I am her commander."

One half of this cruel little speech was lost on Colin. His head swam with sudden faintness, the cabin and

commander appeared to sail round him, and he would have fallen had not the surgeon, who was close behind, caught him in his arms.

When he recovered consciousness he was in his hammock.

XIX.

*NIGH UNTO DEATH—COLIN FINDS A FRIEND ON
BOARD—LIFE IN LIMA—SAUVA ROSA.*

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*NIGH UNTO DEATH—COLIN FINDS A FRIEND ON
BOARD—LIFE IN LIMA—SAUVA ROSA.*

FOR days on days the storm continued to rage with unabated fury. The little vessel had already been blown far south of her course, and must have been in lower latitudes than even the Cape of Good Hope itself. More than once the lieutenant had suggested to Commander Channing the propriety of getting up steam.

The commander pooh-poohed the idea first. Finally he turned upon the lieutenant with lowered brow and flashing eye. "*I'm* the responsible party on board the *Whitterit*, Mr. Clarke!" he snapped. "Leave me to know what is best!"

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Mr. Clarke, humbly—he was a very young man—"I thought I'd suggest——"

"Thought you'd suggest, eh? Humph! Thought I'd forgotten we were a steamer, eh? Take me for a born idiot, I suppose? Um!"

This conversation was being carried on on the little quarterdeck, both the captain and his first officer hang-

ing on by the eyebrows, as sailors say, to the mizen rigging, and swaying and rolling about with every lurch, the while the waves were washing over their sea-boots, and the white spray flying high over the funnel.

She was lying-to, but making plenty of leeway nevertheless, though on the whole the little *Whitterit* was doing just as well and behaving herself as prettily as could be expected of her under such adverse circumstances.

"Tell you what it is, Mr. Clarke," continued the commander, "you have your duty to perform, and I have mine. Yours, sir, is to obey, mine to command. Pardon me, sir, for reminding you of these facts."

"Excuse me, Captain Channing, I didn't——"

"Then *don't!*" cried the commander. "Last time I was out away round the Australian coast I steamed almost every day, because I was on particular service, and what was the consequence, Mr. Clarke? what was the consequence? Got snubbed when I went home; they'd hardly pass my accounts. I'd been wasting her Majesty's coals! Bah! they won't snub me again for the same reason if I——"

The end of the sentence never got out, for a sea cut the captain right in the teeth. He spat and spluttered, shook himself, made a bolt for the companion, missed it, brought up on the starboard tack, and finally disappeared below.

Commander Channing had not gone below because he wanted to avoid the seas. No; he was a good

sailor and a bold, fearless man, though a bit of a tyrant to all under him. He knew everything—or thought he did. Assuredly he knew his own duties, but he ever took it upon him to advise both the engineer and doctor in the discharge of theirs. These officers used to listen to him, say nothing, smile conciliatorily for peace' sake, and go away and do exactly what was right, and nothing more or less.

The little wardroom of the *Whitterit* was so small that there was just room enough and no more to sit around the table that occupied its centre. But this want of space was rather an advantage than otherwise in a gale of wind like the present, because you could wedge yourself into a corner somehow, with your back against the bulkhead and your feet against something else, and so defy the weather. The water was rushing about, inches deep on the wardroom floor; but with one's legs up one did not mind it; it was rather pleasant to listen to than otherwise. Swallowing a cup of tea under such trying circumstances is almost an impossibility. Probably the first lot goes down between your neck and your collar, the second lot into your eye; the third flies over your shoulder; but the fourth will perhaps go the right way. There is nothing like perseverance, and "Try again" is a capital motto.

When the seas struck the *Whitterit* she trembled all over; the coals rattled in the bunkers, the plates jumped out of the pantry, while the biscuits flew out of the tin and got softened in the sea-water on the floor.

The cockreaches had a bad time of it ; they are not good sailors, though they try to be. For example, when they go to get a drink in a basin they do not follow the water when it rolls away with the ship's motion. They know that if they did, in the back rush they would be caught and drowned ; so they wait till it approaches, then take a sip, and wait another opportunity, and so on.

The engineer—a Scotchman, as most navy engineers are—was a very idle man now. But he did not mind that ; he was a philosopher, so he read books and sang songs to himself and laughed at the weather and at things in general.

Poor Colin, though ! It was a sad time for him, and yet I do not think he suffered so much after all, because he was not quite sensible.

He was down with coast fever, or jungle fever, call it what you will. For several days after the surgeon got him back to his hammock he was delirious, raving about his former messmates and his life in the old *Theodora*, raving about his far-away home in the bonnie Highlands, about his mother, about Uncle Peter—ay, and even about Dominie Clayton and his schoolmates of the days of yore.

But Colin's own experiences of this illness were those of one long confused and painful dream. There he lay in his hammock, at times asleep, at times awake—if awake it could be called—but never wholly, never clearly conscious. He cared nothing about what was

happening around him, or about those who passed and repassed him, sometimes stopping though they did to look for a moment into his face or address a few words to him of kindly-meant inquiry. He knew the doctor in rather a strange way; it was not his face, but his arm he knew. He felt this periodically passing in under his head to raise it in order to administer medicine or nutriment, felt the rough sleeve of the pilot-cloth jacket that rubbed against his scalp, and the broad gold lace that always felt so cold against his neck.

This, then, was all he knew of the doctor for many and many a day. The doctor did his duty—faithfully and well, no doubt,—but he seldom, if ever, waited to do any more.

But through all this terrible time Colin was cognisant, somehow or other, that he was not often alone. Some one was near him; a hand was frequently pressed on his aching brow; a folded wet handkerchief would be laid across his burning eyes; when he moaned a voice spoke soothingly into his ear and caused him to drop off to sleep again; and if he murmured “Water!” a spoonful of something acid and cool was placed between his lips. Sometimes he even heard snatches of songs, dear old Scottish melodies, trilled low and sweet, that he knew were meant to soothe him like lullabies.

Then there were other sounds that frequently fell on his ear. At first these were the ceaseless roar of the wind through rigging and shrouds, and the eternal flap

of the jerking, swaying canvas, or shouts and words of command, or, high over all, the shrill notes of a boatswain's pipe. At times there would be a more fearful noise than usual, accompanied by smashing of crockery, and ejaculations of surprise followed almost immediately by stillness broken only by the rushing sound of water. On such occasions the little *Whitterit* would be for a time quite engulfed beneath some mountain wave.

But these sounds became gradually less frequent, and *presently*—as it seemed to Colin—ceased entirely. The “presently” really meant after the lapse of a week or more.

Almost *immediately* after this lull—and the “immediately” meant another week—Colin “dreamed” he heard strange voices on board—or thought he dreamed it,—and the ship was strangely still and quiet, with occasionally the rattle of oars in rowlocks alongside, or the rasp of boats against the ship's timbers.

No, it was not a dream. The *Whitterit* was lying now at anchor in the roadstead off Buenos Ayres. Pity that Colin was not out of hammock and well! he so enjoyed seeing new places.

And Buenos Ayres is well worth a visit, though I have heard many sailor-officers run it down, for the most part, I think, for this reason: the ships have to anchor miles from the shore, and a sailor loves his ship and does not like to have so long a row as this when coming off to dinner.

Nor is the long row the worst of it, for the pier is

rotten when you get there. Perhaps you may have to wade part of the way. It is altogether an unsatisfactory style of getting on shore, and albeit the day may be bright, and the sea smooth and bonnie and blue, the discomfort in landing banishes both pleasure and romance.

Yes, but there is worse perhaps to follow. I mentioned dinner. Well, I, for one—and there are thousands who would say the same—like, after a nice walk on *terra firma*, and a deal of sight-seeing, etc., to jump into my boat and spend my evening on my own ship. But at Buenos Ayres, unless you pay for a special boat, you find, if it has come on to blow, you will have to remain on shore all night, and perhaps the next day and night as well, which is not pleasant.

Nevertheless, there is a charm about the town, especially if one has never been there before. It is a great place, built, like Philadelphia, in blocks, and well spread out with a spacious square and noble public buildings, and streets filled with

“Faces and footsteps and all things strange”—

strange animals, strange natives in strange dresses, strange sights, and strange sounds everywhere.

The next thing that Colin became conscious of was cold. The *Whitterit* was at sea again, and making the most of her passage south, steaming and sailing by turns, for Commander Channing really did not mind steaming if no one advised him to do so.

The weather got colder and colder, and Colin began to revive.

Then he saw one morning a broad, laughing, whiskered, not over-clean face close to his pillow.

"You're better," said the face. "They told me you would die, Scottie, but I stuck to you, man, night and day—either me or my mate. And there you are."

"Bless you!" said Colin faintly, and held out a thin white hand, which the engineer took. "Bless you! I remember; I'll never forget."

"Well," continued the engineer, "I'm at work down here in the engine-room, close by you. If you want me sing out."

So all round the stormy Cape, and for long after, this right rough and honest engineer continued to nurse and tend his countryman as if he had been a child, and, indeed, at the present time Colin felt but very little better.

Round the Cape went the *Whitterit*; I do not know why, for she might have gone through the Magellan Straits. But I know that when talking one day with his commander, Mr. Clarke, the lieutenant, happened to mention the Straits while asking a question.

"No lubber's holes for me," was the somewhat curt reply.

Round the Horn, then, and north and north went the little *Whitterit*. Then at long last the weather grew warmer again, and one day Colin was allowed to sit up a little, and next day a grass hammock filled with wraps

and rugs was hung for him on deck, and he was taken up.

It seemed new life to him, this. The warm sunshine, the pure ozonic breath of the sea! He felt happier than he had done since he came on board the gunboat. And being happy, he grew dreamy, drowsy, and slept.

He was soon conscious that some one stood near him, and he awoke almost with a start.

There stood the commander with a smile on his face that aimed at being friendly, though it missed the mark.

"There you are," he said, "as snug as you please. Um! Nearly well, aren't you? Um! Thought we'd have to expend a hammock over you, though, and a couple of shot. Ha! ha!"

Colin smiled faintly, and closed his eyes again.

Next day he was taken up as before, the *Whitterit* being still under steam, and the sea all round glassy, smooth, and blue.

They were not so very far off the land. Shoals were common here, so men were in the chains heaving the lead, and a man aloft to look out ahead for a change in the colour of the water or even breakers.

Gulls and Cape pigeons—so called—were wheeling and screaming around the vessel, and far off Colin could perceive a solitary whale, rising solemnly out of the water every moment, and moving in a direct line southwards.

He had almost fallen asleep, when the sharp "ping"

of a rifle fell on his ears, and he heard a voice behind him say,

"That's got him!"

"He's not dead, nor even shy," was the answer.

"He's been following the ship a week."

"Well, he'll be disappointed"—it was the surgeon who now spoke,—“for McLeod is going to live.”

It was a shark that had been swimming in the wake of the *Whitterit*. I know from experience that they do so when a man on board is ill and likely to die, but I also know that it is bits of pork fat, and not the man's body, they are after. Sailors have strange superstitions.

But when the ship entered into tropical waters, and the sun burned fiercely down on the deck, even with an awning spread, Colin was so weak he could not be taken up. And down below it was stifling, boiling.

Poor Blair, the Scotch engineer, whenever he had a moment to spare, devoted his time and expended his talents in making cooling fruit-drinks for his countryman.

One evening he caught and cooked a flying-fish, and brought it to Colin's hammock. It was delicious. Colin had some, and it would have done your heart good to have seen the joy depicted on Blair's visage as he stood and watched his patient eating. There were tears in his honest blue eyes, and the silly fellow had to turn away his head to hide them.

But Colin was far worse than the engineer had any

idea of. Here is the tail end of a conversation that took place between Commander Channing and the surgeon a few days after

"Well, then," said the doctor, "I wash my hands of the case."

"You'd shift the responsibility of his death on me, eh?"

"Certainly, sir. I advise that Mr. McLeod be sent ashore at Callao and taken up to the high ground at Lima. That will save his life; nothing else will."

"Indeed!" replied Channing. "Um! Very well, doctor, you'll have your own way *this* time. But the responsibility now rests with you."

"Of course, I take it."

"And you'll find him quarters?"

"A friend of mine, sir, a priest, Fedro to name, whose sister I cured when here last, will take him, and gladly."



The *Whitterit* was anchored at Callao, the seaport of Lima, and Colin was taken up the river, the doctor and Blair going with him, and left with Padre Fedro, and during the fortnight that the gunboat lay at anchor, and Channing conducted mysterious diplomatic business at Lima, both Blair and the surgeon made frequent running visits to Colin.

Then away went the *Whitterit*. She would come back in a month or two—so it was intended.

For more than six weeks Colin hardly ever left his bed. Then he began to revive and take an interest in things around him.

Padre Fedro was a delightful little man, half French, half Spanish, and his sister, a lady of middle age, was a compound of the prim, the quaint, and the curious. In dress she looked *so* ancient ; thus thought Colin. She reminded him of figures he had seen in old pictures by the great masters. But she was kindness personified. Her manner and behaviour towards Colin were those of a nurse and mother combined. She used to glide about the room like a spirit,—a good spirit. Yes, she was very gentle. And whenever her brother appeared she would lift one finger, and he would come in upon tiptoe.

Well, they were strange people. But never mind, between them they nursed Colin back to life, and he was soon able to go downstairs and finally out of doors.

What a charming cottage that was ! To be sure, the walls were so thin that a strong man could have jumped through them, but this is an advantage in a country like this, so subject to earthquakes, for if the houses do fall there is not so much harm done.

The gardens round the cottage were the good padre's especial delight, and such flowers, such climbers, such floral beauty of every kind Colin had never seen before out of a dream. Talking about climbers, the verandahs and porches, and even the walls of the cottage itself, seemed to be held up and supported by them.



"THE LITTLE PADRE JUMPED OUT OF THE CHAIR."

They even crept in, through the ever-open windows, and hung in flowery festoons all round the rooms.

Padre Fedro dwelt about a quarter of a mile from the city itself, and high up above it. But glimpses of Lima could be caught from the cottage garden. Lying in the sunlit valley, it looks like an enchanted city. I admit it is not quite so enchanting on closer acquaintance. All foreign cities look best at a distance.

The life the padre led was a very quiet one. He was in some way connected with the naval school, but he spoke so little of himself that, though Colin stayed with him for five months altogether, he never found out what he did every day. He always came back at night. So did Colin from his wanderings in Lima, beyond its walls, and in the country round about.

Now, it was one of the most natural things in the world that Colin, being here in Lima, should tell his friend the padre all about Mildmay's sad history; but he was not prepared for what followed.

The little padre jumped out of his chair, where he was smoking a meerschau pipe with a bowl nearly as big as his head. He jumped out of his chair, and stuffed the first thing he got hold of into his pipe, by way of putting it out. This happened, by the way, to be his sister's lace handkerchief, but so excited was he that his sister forgave him on the spot.

"I know her; we know her," he cried. "We know your friend Lieutenant Mildmay's little daughter. That is Sauva Rosa. Lives with her old grandma

Pah! it is simple enough; you shall see her to-night."

And Colin did.

Quite a child looked Sauva Rosa. Her blue eyes filled with tears—but she smiled through them—when Colin told her about her father.

"Oh! I know, and I shall see him, shall I not? Grandma has told me all. Tall he is, so handsome, and bold, dressed in blue and gold. Oh! I shall see my father, and I shall know him when I see him."

And the young girl clapped her hands with delight; and the padre's sister wiped a tear away with the handkerchief her brother had lately used so uncere-moniously and blacked her nose, and looked ridiculous.

"You have blacked your nose, my love," said her brother. "But dat is noding. And, my dear Colin," he added, "dis is to me de most delightful of all days in my life. Rosa!"

Rosa ran in the padre's arms and fairly caressed him.

Colin had a little companion now in all his walks and rambles round Lima.

Sauva Rosa's grandmother, too, came to the cottage almost every night. She did nothing but sit and look admiringly at Colin, and utter an exclamation of surprise now and then. I think the old lady's memory was somewhat gone. Besides, she was very deaf, and I'm sure enough of one thing—it took her quite a week fully to comprehend the situation.

How very quickly the time sped now !

Colin could not help fancying himself in a kind of fairy-land, so beautiful were all things around him.

Ah ! but cases like this come but seldom in the desert of a sailor's life.

XX.

*AN EMBRYO MUTINY AND HOW IT WAS QUELLED—
A PLEASANT VOYAGE—ISLES OF BEAUTY—
SHIPWRECK.*

CHAPTER XX.

*AN EMBRYO MUTINY AND HOW IT WAS QUELLED—
A PLEASANT VOYAGE—ISLES OF BEAUTY—
SHIPWRECK.*

PADRE FEDRO came rushing in through the verandah one afternoon, holding both his hands high up in front of him.

Sauva Rosa was there playing the guitar and singing, while, with books in hand, the padre's sister and Colin sat listening in a half-dreamy kind of a way, for the day was very hot.

"Ah! my good young friend," cried the padre. "I have tears in mine eyes; I have sorrow in my heart. Your ship has come."

Sauva Rosa turned suddenly pale.

"What!" she cried. "The *Theodora*? Papa's ship?"

"Nay, my leetle señorita, nay," answered the padre, "but de small goonboat the *Villerit*."

For a moment, but a moment only, Colin's heart sank. He had been living in a kind of fool's paradise. He had been allowing himself too much of the *dolce far niente*. It was all over now. He must go afloat again.

How much he loved Lima now he was going to lose it! Its fountains, its squares, and beautiful buildings, its strange people, its bright skies, its gardens and terraces, —all would soon fade from his gaze.

We shall pass over his parting with the kind padre and his sister. The latter was in tears. And so was Sauva Rosa.

"I shall count every day an age," said the latter, "till I see my dear father. I wish I were going to him as you are."

The train from Lima to Callao is by no manner of means a fast one, but Colin nevertheless soon found himself on the Pacific shore.

There *she* was, the saucy *Whitterit*, at anchor on the bright blue water, trying apparently to look as if she were not the wettest little craft in a seaway that ever floated.

Colin did not look long at her. Truth is, he neither liked her nor cared to be on her. He had suffered so much in her 'tween-decks that there really was nothing pleasant to look back to. Only his duty lay on board her, if his heart did not.

He turned away from the *Whitterit* and was gazing at the fort, and thinking what a gallant thing it was of Lord Cochrane to have cut out the great Spanish *Esmeralda* from under its very guns, when a hand was laid on his shoulder, and, looking up, there was Blair's big honest face beaming on him.

"Man Scottie," he said, "I'm glad to see you."

They shook hands, and as the boat would not be starting for some time, they retired together to a little shop out of the sun, and ordered sherbet, and sat down to talk.

"Man Scottie, you're lookin' fine," said Blair; "but nobody ever thought you'd live."

"And how is Captain Channing?" asked Colin.

"Oh, he's just fine," was the reply; "ramping and raging every day, though. We've been all up and down the coast protecting British interests, and right round as far as Monte Video. Yes, man, our skipper has an awful temper. Yes, everybody else is well on board. The doctor's on shore somewhere buyin' sweet 'taties and a goat, and I've got to look out for some hens."

It was dinner-time—that is, half-past one—when Colin and the doctor and the engineer went on board. Colin went at once and reported himself.

"Um!" was the reply. "Well, go to your duty. Hope we'll get some good out of you now. Fine spell you've had of it! Um! When I was a youngster there was no such chance of fun, I can tell you! Um! Go to your duty, sir."

Colin's heart sank to zero now.

The sight of the dinner-table was not calculated to raise any one's spirits. The tablecloth was not clean, to begin with; the boy who waited looked slovenly; the sweet potatoes were waxy, the fowls roasted to ribbons. Above all, there was everywhere a suspicion of cockroaches.

Colin was not happy; there was a gloom on his spirits that he could not account for. After dinner he commenced to write letters home; that passed the time away till tea came. Then there was the long, dreary evening with nothing to do but read, for in these latitudes it gets dark at or shortly after six o'clock. He was glad when bedtime came and he found himself once more in his hammock. But that hammock—what dreary nights and days of suffering had he not spent in it!

The *Whitterit* got up anchor and sailed away on a Saturday morning, in fine weather, wind about E.S.E. She was bound for the distant Sandwich Islands, so it blew fair, but near the land the wind was light, and steam had been got up to make a good offing.

Commander Channing expressed a wish to go round the ship as soon as she was well clear. He had a reason.

His eagle eyes took everything in at a glance as he walked quickly along. Here he paused to point to a rope that was not coiled. The lieutenant and doctor were with him.

"Let us have things tidy," he growled. "Look, now, at that beef-kid kicking about the deck! Why, on a Newcastle coal-ship you wouldn't see the like!"

"Doctor," he said, stopping before the ship's coppers, "it's *your* duty, sir, to see to the cleanliness of everything."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, then, why don't you? Look at those coppers! Look at that greasy swab, where it lies! Look at the cook himself, for that matter! But why, what on earth have we here? Fowl-coops and live fowls!"

"Please, sir," said a smart-looking carpenter's mate, marching boldly up and saluting, "we thought as how, bein' so long at sea on ship's provisions, a bit of fresh prog——"

"Why," cried the commander, "I never heard of the like before! and without asking my leave either! Bring live pigs on board next! Mr. Clarke, see to it!"

The seeing to it meant sudden death to the fowls.

Now everybody knows that mutiny in the service is a thing that happily is, nowadays, unknown, and this fact I attribute not so much to the better education of our blue-jackets and the strictness of the discipline on board ship and at the naval barracks, as to the kindness of the officers and their thoughtful consideration of the men under their charge. What occurred on board the *Whitterit* during the darkness of this same Saturday night might not have amounted to mutiny, but it really was one of the first steps in that direction.

Commander Channing was not a bad-hearted man in the main, but he allowed feelings and bad-temper to govern too many of his actions. Ordering the men's fowls to be killed was a proof of this. Strange to say, every one of the captain's store of live fowls was made

to walk the plank that night ; there were over three dozen of them. In the morning the coops were empty.

Commander Channing did a wise thing—he said nothing about it.

“As soon,” said Blair, in confidence, to Colin, “as we are fairly at sea the skipper will let out !”

Blair was right. The commander came on deck and took to the bridge one morning, in the forenoon watch, which was Colin's. His face looked dark, his eyes red, as though he had slept but little.

Colin lifted his hat and saluted him, wishing him “Good-morning, sir,” at the same time.

Commander Channing raised his hand quickly by way of returning the salute, and as speedily let it fall. It was as though he but brushed a fly from his brow. Then he said “Um !” and looked at Colin up and down, as if trying to find a fault in his dress.

Colin did not like the scrutiny, but bore it quietly.

“Um !” he repeated. “Send for the engineer.”

Blair came up.

Walking the deck beneath the little bridge, Colin could hear high words, and could distinguish such terms as “foul smoke,” “heated bearings,” “revolutions,” etc., and presently down came Blair, looking flushed and angry.

“He's in a fine tear this morning !” he said, as he passed Colin.

“Thank you, Mr. Blair,” said Commander Channing ; “I have good ears !”

Not a doubt of it, he had good ears. And he had also good eyes, for in a few moments he looked aloft, and shouted, "Foretop there!"

"Ay, ay, sah!" replied the Krooman.

"Anything in sight?"

"Nuffin,' sah; on'y a whale, sah, on de lee bow."

"Can't you see that sail there—right away on the weather quarter?"

"No sail dere, sah. I'ssure you, sah."

"Come down from aloft, sir. Mr. McLeod, run up and report."

Colin was aloft in a moment.

"Yes, sir," he cried; "there is a barque there."

"What nationality?"

"No flag, sir."

"Can't you guess by her rig?"

"No, sir."

"Come down, then. Mr. Clarke, would you oblige me by having a look?"

Mr. Clarke had just come up, though it was not his watch. He obeyed orders, but could make nothing of the ship.

Then without a word the commander himself went up. He called her "an American, sure enough," and asked Mr. Clarke if he had ever been to sea before. Mr. Clarke said nothing, but walked below.

Then the doctor came up and reported the sick.

"Never heard of such a thing before in my life!" roared the commander. "Fifteen men sick out of a

crew of seventy all told. Why, sir, I've been in a line-of-battle ship with only half the number sick !"

Blair was waiting on deck to report something about the stokehole, and he whispered to Colin, "The doctor is the only one of us who can manage to walk to windward of the skipper."

"Indeed, sir," said the surgeon to the commander, "I don't see how your former experience bears upon the case in hand."

"But *I* do," cried Commander Channing.

"Do you mean to reflect on my treatment of the sick ?"

"Sir," cried the Commander, "the tone of voice in which you now address me is not in accordance with the respect due to a captain of a ship from his officers."

The doctor saluted and retired.

Next the assistant-paymaster came in for a share of the storm. Then Colin again. Then Mr. Clarke was sent for to hold a private interview in the commander's cabin, and every one passing could hear high words.

Towards afternoon matters waxed worse. Krooman after Krooman was taken down from aloft, and punished because he had not seen something or done something which he ought to have done.

Next morning Mr. Clarke was ill—so he said. Mr. Blair, the engineer, was ill—so he said. The assistant-paymaster was ill—so he said.

The doctor smiled to himself, and put their names on the sick-book and prescribed for them.

By-and-bye he went on the quarter-deck. The commander was much cooler to-day. He even returned the doctor's salute with a smile, and said good-morning.

"*Eighteen* on the list, sir. Among them are three officers."

"Um?"

"Three officers, sir."

The commander bit his lip.

"Mr. McLeod looks rather pale, sir," continued the doctor; "I believe he is taking it too. And I don't feel over well myself."

It really was very mischievous of the doctor to speak like this. But all the commission till now the commander had been making his officers miserable, and a crisis had come.

The commander took half-a-dozen turns up and down the deck. Then he burst out laughing.

"Thank you, doctor," he said. And the surgeon went below.

Colin had double duty to perform that day. But he did not mind it. The captain kept nearly all the time in his cabin, only towards the afternoon his steward handed a note to the doctor. Would he, it asked, kindly permit his three patients, Messrs. Clarke, Reeve (the assistant paymaster), and Blair, to dine with him to-night, and would he himself come along with them? This was at tea-time. The doctor laughed as he

handed the note round the table. Mr. Clarke laughed too.

"By the little old man of the sea," said Clarke, "the commander has conquered after all. It would show malevolence to refuse. Let us go."

So they all went, and a very nice dinner they had. But Commander Channing never once mentioned the word "sick-list."

Next day the officers all went to duty again, and so the mutiny ended, and things were more pleasant after this. But somehow the commander and Colin did not get on well, though the latter tried to do his very best, often with a faint and weary heart, only he always remembered the good advice his dear old sea-daddy gave him, and stuck to his duty.

* * * * *

The *Whitterit* and her commander were very much alike, in a manner of speaking. They each liked a considerable deal of their own way. When they had this, everything went right; they could do the work given them to do, and do it well.

The commander had finished his business with the Peruvians in a very creditable manner, and, as he told Clarke one day in a burst of confidence, never lost his temper once, and never wrote a letter which he would like to recall.

The *Whitterit* had fine weather for a whole week, with a pleasant sea and light winds. There was no very great hurry now on the voyage, so fires were

banked, and the little ship behaved herself in a way no one could find fault with. Her decks were white and dry, the canvas she carried, 'low and aloft, looked like the white wings of some beautiful sea-bird; the ocean all around sparkled by day under the sun's bright light, and at night reflected the twinkling rays of a thousand stars.

The sunrises and the sunsets were magnificent. No pen or pencil, no artist's brush, could convey more than a faint, faint notion of their surpassing gorgeousness.

But when a strong breeze sprang up, then the *Whitterit* got angry, passionate, furious. The decks were constantly all a-swim. She jerked, and tugged, and dipped, and plunged, like a mad thing. In very truth she preferred going under the water rather than over the waves. Only she made good knottage. Still, any very strong breezes in this voyage to the Sandwich Islands were rather the exception.

Colin would have been happy enough now had not his commander been such a hard taskmaster. Instead of feeling himself to be filling the station of a gentleman, willing and able to do so well, and needing nothing but the bare perception of his duty to make him perform it, he was made to consider himself but little better than a schoolboy, and bad at that. He was watched, snarled at, his every action criticised, and he got no credit for honest performance of duty. He tried hard to please, and even his zeal was misconstrued. His heart was as it were thrown, nay, rather dashed back upon it-

self, until he began to feel almost reckless and full of despair.

Otherwise what a bright and happy voyage might this not have been! Everything was new, strange, charming. The very birds looked as if they belonged to some other planet; the sky, the sea, by day or by night, were different from any skies or seas Colin's eyes had ever rested on before. The sharks were the same, coming up from the profundity of dark blue, and appearing close under the quarter—so close that you could see their terrible eyes, in which ferocity was blended with a languid shyness that made you shudder; dark grey were they in the sunshine, fishes of fire were they by night, for the slightest movement of fin or quiver of body brought out the play of phosphorescence all around them. But other fishes were so grotesque in shape and so wildly fantastic in colour that Colin could not help wondering for what reason Nature had painted them thus.

After what might have been called a long voyage, if time had been of much object to these mariners, the *Whitterit* made the Sandwich group of islands. Here she cruised for one long delightful month.

The month passed by far too soon, and once more the *Whitterit* was at sea, making her way southwards, the commander meaning to visit the Society Islands, then make his way homewards round the Horn.

They were about twenty days out from Honolulu, and had already visited one or two of those lovely little

islands that dot the Pacific Ocean in these latitudes, and which some consider the remains of a submerged continent, while others look upon them as but the foundations of immense islands that will gradually be built upwards out of the sea and at some distant day support great and mighty nations.

Hitherto the weather had been fine, with variable winds, but one night the sun sank into the ocean surrounded by extraordinary-looking clouds. Between these clouds and the horizon there was a semi-clear space, and just before he finally set, the god of day glowed athwart the water from this, not red as usual, but of a strange sulphurous colour as if shining through smoke. And the waves had all the same portentous tint.

As far as the charts could tell there was plenty of sea room, but charts of these seas are seldom right.

Shortly after sundown a storm came on, with the loudest thunder and brightest forked lightning that ever Colin had heard or seen. Squall after squall struck the little vessel, and, though she was almost sailless, heeled her several times over on her beam ends. But steam was up now, and for a time there was apparently little danger.

Near midnight, the commander being still on deck, and the seas making a clean breach over the *Whitterit*, Blair, the engineer, staggered aft to report an accident to the machinery, and nearly at the same moment the engines stopped.

The gunboat was now for a time at the mercy of winds and waves, but more sail was with great difficulty got up and she was laid-to.

About one bell the storm seemed at its very worst; half an hour after it slightly moderated, though the spray and even seas dashed constantly over the vessel, and it was so dark nothing could be seen either ahead or astern. It was a fearful night.

Colin was below but could not turn in. He sat on his sea-chest, to which he had to cling, the motion was so quick and constant.

In after life he often looked back to that terrible storm and wondered why he had not turned in. He would have been far more comfortable in his hammock.

It was Providence that prevented him from doing so. He was thinking of home, and sometimes breathing a prayer for the dear ones there, and for the safety of himself and all on board. Suddenly there was a fearful rasping crash, a sound that once heard is never, never to be forgotten. Colin was thrown far forward off the sea-chest, and when he picked himself up the masts were going by the board, any one could have told that, and the seas were tumbling down the hatchway, which had been smashed off.

Next moment, so it seemed, he was in the surf, the water surging in his ears, and so, blinded and deaf, he found himself shortly cast up—he never knew how—on a sandy beach. He clung to a bit of exposed rock, while

the wave receded and left. Before it returned he managed to crawl inland.

There were bushes about, there were stars overhead, there was the roaring, boiling sea behind him. That was all he knew. It was an island of some kind.

XXI.

*THE BURIED. TREASURE—THE EARTHQUAKE—]
ALONE ON AN UNKNOWN ISLAND.*

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BURIED TREASURE—THE EARTHQUAKE— ALONE ON AN UNKNOWN ISLAND.

THE story that Colin had told Padre Fedro about the early career of Lieutenant Mildmay had made a deep impression upon the mind of the kindhearted little priest, especially that portion of it which related to the sunken treasure—the gold buried in the sand.

“I do not know,” Colin had said to him, “whether I may be doing right or not in telling you this. The secret is not mine. But I believe I am acting for the very best. Here then,” he had added, putting papers in the padre’s hand, “are the plans of the coast where the gold lies buried. Whatever you do—if indeed you think fit to do anything at all in the matter—something tells me will be for the best. And, sir, I think myself happy in having found you, and thankful, oh! so thankful, that I shall be the means of restoring my dear friend’s daughter to him.”

For nights and nights after Colin’s departure the padre lay awake thinking what he should do.

Poor little Sauva Rosa and her grandmother were very poor. Indeed the former was the bread-winner.

She taught music, especially among the Europeans. And to think that within a measurable distance of them wealth was lying on the coast, and that that wealth was theirs by right!

Then the padre determined to act. He took his sister into his confidence. She advised a consultation in the first place with the old grandmother.

"Surely," said the priest's sister, "she can remember something."

She did remember something when questioned, just as you or I would, reader, of a dream long gone by. But it was enough to decide the padre in his course of action. He was by no means a wealthy man, but he would spend a portion of his money in an attempt to find this buried treasure.

He bade his sister good-bye, and started for Callao. He told his sister to pray for him, that was all, and if he were successful it would be owing to the goodness of the kind Father in heaven; if he failed it would be; because He—the Father—willed it so. The padre's faith was a very simple and beautiful one.

At Callao he was more fortunate than he could have expected to be. English, or rather British divers had been at work near the mole on a sunken vessel. Their labour was finished, and they were not sorry to have a promise of more work.

Padre Fedro's next move was to charter a small schooner. On board this was conveyed not only all the divers' craft and apparatus, but provisions for half

a year. and timber and implements to build huts on shore.

Then the schooner sailed away to the coast where the treasure lay. Somehow the nearer to the place the vessel came the higher rose the padre's hopes. But when he arrived at last and cast anchor at the very spot from which Loreana's sketches had been taken, and found every landmark, and rock, and boulder on the coast to coincide with the draughts, then indeed his heart beat high, and he felt sure of success.

About half a mile distant from this place a long reef extended having deep water between it and the shore, and into this natural harbour the *Spera*—as the padre called his little craft—was sailed and moored permanently. Opposite to her on shore huts were built and entrenched, the accommodation on board the schooner being small. Entrenchment was necessary, for the country around here is wild and lawless, and before a week was over and work had fairly commenced the wisdom of it was apparent enough. A band of horsemen arrived and encamped near. A more lawless-looking, cut-throat crew was seldom seen; partly brigands, partly gipsies, but with mouths filled with butter and honey, you would have said, so sweet and soft was their speech.

They were wondering what the white foreigners were about. They stayed there for days and wondered. The padre had boat-loads of beautiful coral taken on shore, and made a pile of, and placed an armed man to

watch it. The ruse was successful. The gipsy brigands drew near to the pile and wondered, and wondered again. Then one morning they came to the conclusion that the white men were nearly all mad or fools, and so wondering still they broke up camp and rode off.

And band after band of these wanderers arrived from time to time, but seeing nothing to steal, or anything worth fighting about, they smiled to themselves in their oily deceitful way, and went away.

At the end of three months Padre Fedro seemed no nearer success than ever.

The divers found the boxes of the sunken ship, but not many of these. The keel was there, however, deeply embedded in sand and mud. Padre Fedro would not give up hopes, however. He was there every day on which a boat could float watching the work progressing.

There were days of storm, though, when no work could be done. And if the wind were from the west, as it frequently was, and the waves beat mountains high on the beach, the divers when the tempest ended, always found they had to begin their labours nearly all over again, all their excavations having been covered over with sand and mud.

It was heartless, thankless work. But they toiled away, for the padre was of the sanguine temperament, and never lost hope.

But he almost did at last. Five months had come

and gone, and they seemed no nearer success than at the commencement ; and now the head diver announced to Padre Fedro that he must in a week or two more give up the "job," as he called it. His family expected him at home.

Poor Padre, he felt a ruined man ! Yet he merely bowed his head, meekly sighed, and breathed a prayer.

But the end had yet to come. One day, although the sun was quite obscured by immense piles of inky-black clouds, it was so hot and oppressive that the men gave up work and came on shore. There was not a breath of wind, and yet high over head those clouds moved and mixed together in a most mysterious way. At half-past six there was a sharp thunderstorm, the lightning being singularly vivid. It was pitchy dark before the storm came on, but now hills and rocks and the sea itself seemed all on fire.

The little schooner in which the padre slept never ceased to quiver and shake with the rattling, vibrating bursts of thunder.

The storm passed away over the distant mountains, and darkness resumed its sway. But lo ! hardly had midnight come ere a low, ominous, rumbling noise was heard coming onwards from the direction of the hills. Every one was awake in a moment. All knew what it meant. Those in the schooner rushed on deck. Those in the little fort fled out into the open, and threw themselves face downwards on the earth.

The noise of the subterranean thunder was appalling, and the earth moved and heaved as if it had been the sea itself, and a strange giddiness and sickness stole over every one.

In thirty seconds the earthquake had passed. But now a great wave came rushing inland. The *Spera* broke her moorings and was carried shorewards with it. Luckily the fort stood on high rocky ground, or not a soul would have been left alive in it. As it was, the spray dashed high over all, and the sound of the breaking water was deafening.

Hardly had the *Spera* touched bottom before she was off again, sucked backwards with the after-rush.

All that night the men had to pump for their lives. Morning broke at last, and the sun gleamed red and fierce over the ocean, which was calm with a heaving swell, while, save a few leaflets of gold and crimson high up towards the zenith, there was not a cloud in the sky.

The good padre gazed in surprise to notice that, though it was high tide, far more of the beach than had ever been exposed, even at ebb, was visible now.

He hurried on shore in his dinghy. His people were seated at breakfast. They could talk about nothing else, think about nothing save the recent earthquake. As for the appearance presented by the foreshore, they could make nothing of it.

They were not so used to earthquakes as was Padre Fedro.



"A METAL-ROUND CHEST OF GREAT WEIGHT WAS FOUND."

"It is nothing unusual in this climate," he quietly remarked, "for upheavals of the sea bottom to occur on parts of the coast and depressions on others. But stay till low water," he added, smiling, "and the scene of your recent labours will be high and dry."

And so it was! There was but little need even for divers now. The keel of the sunken ship, and her ribs, and the remains of her beams, could be walked round at low tide. Then the work proceeded merrily.

In under the very keel, after another week of hard work, a long metal-bound chest of great weight was found. It was more like a piece of rock at first than anything else, so encrusted with lime was it, but a few blows of the hammer revealed what it was. Padre Fedro had found the sunken treasure. None too soon, though, for hardly had it been conveyed on board the schooner ere the beach swarmed with gipsy brigands.

The padre would fain have stayed to make good repairs, for the vessel was far from seaworthy; but better trust themselves to the stormiest ocean than fall into the harpy hands of that lawless band, whose very profession was rapine, and violence and murder mere accessories thereto.

In ten days more Padre Fedro had the treasure safe in bank, and was at home in his own quiet cottage, relating to his sister and Sauva Rosa, and in a louder key to the old grandmammina, all his adventures, and how mercifully Providence had protected him.



We must now return to the island on which the *Whitterit* was wrecked.

It is sad to think of, but out of all that crew of over seventy good and gallant men, only seven stood alive on the beach on the morning after their little vessel had been driven on shore. How they had got there seemed a mystery, for even yet the sea was mountains high, and the breakers were tumbling in on the sands like mighty cataracts.

Colin and Blair were the only surviving officers: the cook, a Krooman, two able seamen, and a boy, were the others saved.

Colin himself had got ashore intact, though half drowned; but several of the others had been severely lacerated among the sharp coral rocks.

The ship was going rapidly to pieces. They were on a small uninhabited island, with merely a jungle behind them and two or three cocoa-nut trees, so they at once set about saving all the wreckage they could. Spars, ropes, pieces of timber, sea-chests, everything was picked out of the surf they could lay hands on. A cask of biscuit was a great find. The contents were soaked with sea-water, but they could be dried in the sun.

They worked hard all that day, and as soon as night fell retired to rest into a cave they found in a wall of black, burned-looking rocks close to the beach. The floor of this cave was the silver sand, but it was warm and dry, and the ship-wrecked mariners were

soon fast asleep. They were awakened about midnight in a strange way. A regiment of monster crabs had invaded the cave. These were finally driven out, and scuttled away in the moonlight towards the sea.

Colin could not go to sleep again, however. He lay for an hour on the warm sand, then got up and walked forth into the night. The wind had gone down; there was above him a dark-blue sky, with a round pale moon, and bright twinkling stars; on one side was the black cliff, on the other the snow-white wall of tumbling breakers.

He did not feel alone, though, nor did he feel hopeless, sad though his heart was. He sat down on a rock and gazed outwards to sea. Not a vestige of the vessel remained. No wonder a tremor passed through his frame as he thought of his poor commander and messmates all gone to their last account.

Why, he asked himself, should he have been spared? He did not pause to answer his own question, but dropped there on his knees and breathed out his soul in thanksgiving to the merciful Providence that had protected him.

He did not sit up again, but lay there in the sand, with his back against the rock, and his hand supporting his elbow.

Memories of home once more stole over him; he thought of the dear old glen, and his mother, father, and brother, till they seemed actually to rise up before him, and their voices to mingle with the roar of the

surf. But the sound of the breakers grew less and less distinct, and—Colin slept.

It was Blair who awoke him. "Found you at last, have I?" he said. "Man! what a thud my heart gave against my ribs when I awoke this morning and missed you. You have fairly frightened my wits away. Come to breakfast."

Breakfast consisted of biscuit and raw salt pork, washed down with cocoa-nut milk.

They set about exploring the island after this meal, but found no water at first. They finally came upon a large pool in a rock. It was evidently rain-water, but they laid pieces of wood across it, and covered it carefully with sailcloth, lest the sun might steal their priceless treasure.

No more wreckage came on shore, but some bodies did. And these they buried deep in the sands close to the cliff, and raised rude crosses over their graves.

They spent the day in wandering about the shore and gathering some seaweed of an edible kind, and some species of small shell-fish, which they found most palatable and luscious. They often gazed seaward.

They gazed in vain. No ship nor even boat was in view. They were Crusoes to all intents and purposes. They were marooned.

When they retired to their cave on the second night they drew after them branches and brushwood as a protection against those horrible crabs.

About midnight Colin awoke suddenly. He thought

he could distinctly hear voices mingling with the monotonous roar of the surf on the sand.

He grasped Blair's arm and bade him listen.

In addition to the sound of voices there was ever and anon a clashing noise as of men fencing with sword-sticks.

"Listen," cried Colin. "There are people outside."

"Never a people," was Blair's answer. "Go to sleep, man. It's only the partans (*Scottice*, crabs). They're no ower well pleased at bein' kept out o' their cave. Go to sleep."

Day after day went by in dreary monotony. The boy who had been saved died. They buried him near the others.

In another week they had to bear one of the seamen to his long home. Both these died from the effects of their wounds, but their loss was severely felt by those left behind.

Water now began to get scarce, and no more rain fell.

They put themselves on short allowance of water, but while they did so they confessed it would probably be as well to drink it. For it was the heat that was causing its absorption. "Why," one or two reasoned, "should we suffer from thirst? why not use it instead of letting the sun get it? It can make but small difference in the long run."

But Colin and Blair ruled otherwise, and it was surprising that the surviving men still looked up to

their two officers as their superiors, and gave them as much respect and obedience as if they had all been on board ship.

Great comfort was found from bathing in the sea. For the skin absorbs the water, though not the salt. Cocoa-nuts still held out, but there was a limit to even these.

The pork had gone bad. It was thrown upon the beach, and the crabs devoured it.

Their main stay in a fortnight's time came to be the biscuits.

Lower and lower fell the water in the rocky tank, and lower and lower sank their spirits in consequence. One evening they found they could barely scoop up a cupful. Next morning the water was gone, the tank was dry.

Their sufferings now began in earnest. They spent the days they hardly knew how, wandering over the island in a meaningless kind of way, or gazing seawards for help, or skywards for a shower of rain.

But the sky was like steel; the sea showed nothing except when the wind blew higher than usual, then it was dotted over with little white flakes that their eyes often and often caused them to believe were vessels' sails. Three days went past thus without water. Neither Colin nor Blair ceased to move about, but the other three lay motionless or delirious in the cave.

When Colin had nearly given up and wanted to lie down in the shade and die, Blair, to his joy, found

three green cocoa-nuts, each of which contained about a pint and a half of delicious water.

The water of one nut was carefully divided, and the drooping men began to revive ; they slept soundly that night, and were able to assist next day in the search for more fallen cocoa-nuts. They found some succulent herbs, but no more nuts.

It was the morning of a broiling hot day. The very ocean seemed to steam. The last cocoa-nut had been finished the day before. The men had relapsed into a kind of drowsy stupor.

Colin sat on the cliff-top under the shade of a stunted breadfruit-tree. Near him lay Blair, sometimes quite still, then falling off into a momentary doze, from which he would start up talking nonsense, recollect himself, gaze wildly about him for a few seconds, then sink wearily down again.

“Then passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.
A weary time ! A weary time !
How glazed each weary eye !
When looking forward, he beheld
A something in the sky.

“At first it seemed a little speck,
And then it seemed a mist ;
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist.”

Colin sprang up ; his eyeballs seemed starting from their sockets. Was it a cloud, a bird, or but the fin of

a monster shark? No, it was—a ship far away on the horizon.

“A ship!” he shouted.

Blair started up. Blair was very weak now. He laughed and wept by turns, as he pointed seawards.

The men staggered out of the cave; they had heard the shout. And *they* pointed away towards the sea with both hands held aloft, but they could not speak, their “tongues through utter drought seemed withered at the roots,” and when they opened their mouths only sounds like those the dumb make issued therefrom.

Nearer and nearer came the vessel. Colin took off his jacket and waved it in the air.

Nearer still, tack and half-tack, a three-masted schooner, and evidently English. What a glad some sight for the weary eyes of those shipwrecked sailors!

XXII.

*BACK IN THE OLD "THEODORA"—SAILORS ON SHORE
— FIGHTING INLAND — HAND-TO-HAND WITH
SAVAGES.*

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—FIGHTING INLAND—HAND-TO-HAND WITH
SAVAGES.*

"THERE is going to be some fun." "There is going to be some fighting." "There is going to be a row."

These are not the expressions I myself care to listen to on the eve of what may turn out to be a very severe engagement. They are nevertheless very common ones among our blue-jackets on such occasions, and I am bound to paint the service as I have found it. The British navy sailor or soldier is the least cruel in heart of all warriors on the face of the earth. As a rule he would not wantonly harm a fly ; but let him only know that the cause for which he is about to fight is a just and a good one, and no one will sharpen cutlass or sword with greater zest than he.

Yes, there was going to be a row, and it was going to take place on the Gold Coast.

The *casus belli* was simple in the extreme. Things of this kind usually are. Two missionaries from England, accompanied by a French traveller, had coa-

ceived the bold design of starting from the coast near Addah and penetrating into the land of Dahomey. It was their intention to visit the king of that dark land, and endeavour if possible to persuade him to abolish the awful human sacrifices that usually took place on every one of his high days and holidays, or whenever the king needed a little excitement.

The idea was good, and in theory the plan seemed feasible enough. They were to go as men of peace, they would carry no arms, do nothing to provoke a quarrel, and trust entirely to the justice of the cause they meant to plead. These gentlemen succeeded in getting Commodore O'Connell to lend them a few Kroomen—excellent fellows and faithful—to act as guides and help them through the bush.

So good a scheme ought to have been crowned with success. But, alas! it was not. Dahomey happened to be at war just then with a neighbouring tribe who owned territory that had once been a section of his own country.

By this tribe the travellers were made prisoners, and thrown into a dungeon to await their release if ransomed, their death if not.

Dahomey, when he heard of it, was naturally indignant. He did not love white men any more than the chief of the Poonasees, but these prisoners were to have been guests of his, and if the right of putting them to death or parting with them for a ransom belonged to any one, it belonged to him.

So he increased his forces, gazetted more officers than usual—female officers of course—to his regiments of viragos, consulted his priests, sacrificed a lot of sheep, and fowls, and ducks, and, sad to say, a few human beings as well, and prepared to demolish the Poonasees.

The Poonasees in their turn resolved to defend themselves. They did more—they even carried war into the camp of their enemy, defeated the viragos in two pitched battles, and threatened Abomey. The King of Dahomey had not been quick enough.

Meanwhile one of the imprisoned Kroomen was executed as a beginning ; another escaped, and making his way to the coast, related all, and an expedition for the release of the two Englishmen was determined upon forthwith.

A council of war was held on shore, and no time was lost. Compared to the hordes they would have to encounter our men were a mere handful. But they had skill, they had push, and—*and they were British !*

It was the evening before the march. All was in readiness, and nothing was talked about either fore or aft in the *Theodora* or in the *Aurora* except the coming brush with the savages.

It was about one bell in the first night watch ; Quentin and Benbow were walking the quarter-deck, Benbow as merry as ever ; nothing ever disconcerted this bold little gentleman. There was nothing doing on board the *Theodora*. Silence reigned everywhere, when sud-

denly the signalman reported the lights of a ship coming in. The lights were very low down and very near each other. She could not be large ; nor was she. It was only the *Foumart*, a tiny despatch vessel; and in half-an-hour she was snugly at anchor astern of the *Theodora*.

Wonders will never cease. They never do cease at sea, at all events. And shortly after the *Foumart* had anchored and gone to sleep to all appearances on the smooth breast of the gently heaving sea, a boat was heard coming rapidly towards the *Theodora*.

Clunk-click — clunk-click — clunk-click — went the sound of the oars.

Presently the sentry hailed, "Boat ahoy!"

"Ay, ay!" was the cheery response. And in a few moments more she was alongside the starboard ladder, and Colin himself was running up.

Quentin and Benbow caught each a hand of our long-lost hero and pulled him towards the light.

As fast as he could talk he told them his adventures. There was no time to dwell on them, for his first duty was to report himself to Lieutenant Mildmay and Captain Blunderbore. But he found time to rattle out a sentence or two.

"Horrid times of it in the *Whitterit*. Sick—very ill—nearly dead—ashore at Lima for nearly six months—*Whitterit* wrecked—myself and four more all the saved—nearly dead on an island—taken off at last by a pleasure yacht—landed at the Cape—came up here in

the *Foumart*—going to be tried by court-martial for losing my ship."

"Of course you will," said Benbow, in a bantering tone of voice, "and you'll very likely be shot, and serve you right too. But trot below, old man, and report yourself"

Both Captain Blunderbore and Mildmay were unfeignedly glad to see Colin. And it was fully an hour before he got up on deck again. There was so much to tell.

"I daresay," said the good-natured captain, "I ought to put you under arrest pending your court of inquiry anent the loss of the *Whitterit*, but I'm not going to do anything of the kind. You won't desert, I suppose, so you'd better go to duty, and we'll want you to-morrow on shore."

"When you've had a good long gossip with your messmates on deck," said Mildmay, putting his hand on Colin's shoulder and leading him out, "come to my cabin."

So up went Colin again, and his messmates, including Brown and D'Austin, gathered round him to hear a more detailed account of his adventures. When he had finished—

"And what has the *Theodora* been doing all the time?" he asked.

"Been to Australia," said Quentin, "and we also had some fighting with the Maories down south."

"Oh, yes!" cried Benbow, "and you wouldn't

believe it, but Stupid-numerary Brown here has made quite a hero of his little self. We all thought that there was nothing in him but 'the bones' till we saw him charge the Maories. But come, boys, I'm going to turn in. The 'rouse' will sound before we know where we are."

Then Colin found his way to Mildmay's cabin.

"Oh!" he cried, as soon as he got inside the curtain, "I have such good news for you!"

"Sit down, sit down," replied Mildmay; "don't say a word till you are seated. I know what is coming. God has heard my prayer. But begin at the very beginning; don't forget anything. Work gradually up to the best part of your story. I'm not going to let you go for an hour yet. As for myself, I shall not turn in to-night. We're going to have a bit of tough fighting, and I always write before I fight. Here is tea. Have some. Don't say a word till you've done."

Then Mildmay threw himself into his rocking-chair and set himself to listen.

I leave the reader to judge whether Colin's story pleased him or not.

* * * * *

The "rouse" sounded about six bells in the middle watch. Then the men breakfasted, and before four of the clock the boats had shoved off.

It was clear starlight above, but the hills and woods were covered with a snow-white mist. The soldiers were drawn up near the shore. They challenged the

boats—more for fashion's sake than anything else—and were duly and ceremoniously answered. Long before sunrise the little army was in full march up country.

The few Kroomen they had brought with them, including the man who had escaped from the Poonasees and Benbow's blameless Ethiopian Othello—the little rascal had come on shore without leave—were in charge of the interpreter Golava.

Golava's knowledge of bush life had been of the utmost service to our man-o'-war ships many and many a time on the coast, and was invaluable now.

He managed his Kroomen and some native guides in a wonderful way. He formed them into a kind of advanced guard, but well spread out. Golava himself was the centre and director of their movements, and everything was reported to him. There was little fear, therefore, of our fellows finding themselves in the midst of a morass, exposed to the attacks of an unseen enemy, or even in wood or jungle that there was no way out of.

For two days never an enemy was visible. On the morning of the third natives were seen for a moment. They fled; but when natives appear and fly suddenly they have those behind them who mean fighting.

This little expedition was under the command of Mildmay, and carefully and well he handled his men.

He made no extra hurry. He was not going to incur the mistake of fatiguing his men before the right time. They halted regularly for meals, and rest, and sleep.

He was not too proud to consult with McGee about the most wholesome place for the camp at night, for Death roams through these jungles and glens in the shape of miasmata, and claims more victims than the muskets, pikes, or knives of the natives. And it so happened that the present was the most unhealthy time of the year for campaigning.

It was about noon on the fourth day, and the little army was passing through a forest that stretched upwards on a hill with a deep morass beneath, which it would have been perilous in the extreme, if not impossible, to cross. It was about noon, and terribly hot; in under the trees there was shade enough, but not a breath of wind; the very birds were gasping for air as they crouched open-mouthed in the cotton-trees. The men were panting and tired, and no one was sorry when in a clearing a halt was called and dinner served out.

The trees in this forest jungle were very high, and dark, and bushy, while underneath was an intricate mass of creeping and climbing plants. sometimes it was impossible for a man to see his comrades if twenty feet ahead or to one side of him. It was an ugly spot for a fight to take place in, certainly not the situation Mildmay would have chosen of his own free will. But he was the victim of circumstances, for by making their way through this jungle a distance of fully fifteen miles was saved on the march towards the stronghold where the prisoners were confined.

The men had finished their meagre meal, and were lounging on the ground, when suddenly, without the slightest warning, without warlike shout or 'beat of tom-tom, a perfect shower of bullets was poured into their midst.

For a moment it was startling in the extreme. The pickets had given no warning. Neither Golava nor any of his Kroomen had been driven in.

It was soon discovered that the savages were lodged in the trees. Golava had passed them without noticing their presence.

It was difficult to dislodge them, but it was done at last, and none too soon. Golava had rushed back to report the enemy coming through the jungle in millions—so Golava's figurative language described it.

Mildmay lost no time in extending his forces in battle array and advancing. Luckily the jungle was less dense now, but it was thick enough to impede the progress of our men, while the savages, with whom they soon got to close quarters, seemed perfectly at home in the place.

The fight was a desperate one. The enemy was in clouds, and it appeared after a time as if annihilation itself to our troops would be the terrible result. There was no time to lose. The foe must be outflanked. Gayly on the right and Benbow on the left were thrown out, each with a brave band of blue-jackets.

In less than twenty minutes rattling volleys were heard in the rear, and the enemy fell back. The

forest now ended on a bare plateau, and here taken on all sides, with our men free to act, the enemy was in a few minutes utterly routed and demoralised, and our fellows paused to rest.

Mildmay complimented them on the gallant way they had behaved, and well they deserved it, each and all of them.

West had fought to-day with all his customary nonchalance. To him a battle was simply a problem to be solved, and he rather prided himself on being able to solve problems of this kind. Several times within the first quarter of an hour he had managed to win points of vantage, and to bring succour at critical moments to places where men were hand-to-hand and nearly overpowered.

Benbow, who fought rather heedlessly, would have died to-day had it not been for West's timely aid. The former with three daring blue-jackets had "rushed" a rock held by about fifty of the enemy, and been beaten in consequence. Benbow was on the ground with a triangular spear at his neck, when West "went in" with ten marines, among whom was gallant Duncan Robb, and turned the tide of battle. A short time after this West and his chosen handful had put thrice their number to the rout and succoured Mildmay himself.

Hours were spent in attending to the wounded and preparing to continue the advance.

The road led over an open plain now, towards more

forest, and here there was evidence enough that the enemy was concealed.

When they had arrived within about five hundred yards of the forest our men halted, and an entrenched position was at once thrown up.

Afterwards skirmishers were thrown out, but they could not tempt the enemy from the woods.

A consultation was now held, at which Golava and the Krooman who had escaped from the savages were present, and a little *ruse de guerre* was forthwith determined on.

Ten miles from their present position—the road leading through the forest—was the river, and on it the stronghold of the Poonasees, while here in front of them was the chief portion of our *corps d'armée*, the army itself in full strength being at another of the dominions fighting against Dahomey. Mildmay determined to leave Gayly and Quentin with sufficient men, and no more, to protect the newly-made camp, while he himself—guided by Golava and his Krooman—should make a forced march with the bulk of his troops in a different direction, and if possible capture the fort by *coup de main*.

Accordingly, soon after nightfall, when pickets had been stationed outside the ramparts, Mildmay and his fellows stole silently away and commenced the *détour*, and long before daylight were concealed in a wood, with the river near them, and beyond it on the top of a stiff hill the stronghold they were about to storm.

It was far stronger than they had had any idea of. With the axes they carried they could not have forced the gate without great loss of life, and they had no artillery worth the name.

"Blow in the gate," said Colin.

"Bravo!" said Benbow, "you had the word before me."

"Who will volunteer to fire the bomb?" said Mildmay.

There was something akin to a shout in answer to the lieutenant's question.

"Hush! hush!" he cried.

It was now daylight, and the enemy's savage sentinels could be seen consulting together and gazing intently towards the wood where our men were concealed.

Extra precautions were necessary, extra quietness must be maintained, so Mildmay drew off his men from the river; they walked on tiptoe across the turf, careful not to snap even a branchlet or twig.

Having gained a good offing, a bomb was quickly prepared, a good old-fashioned one, it must be confessed, merely a large bag of gunpowder with a piece of fuse so fixed as to be easily fired, but impossible to pull out without tearing the sack.

While this was being done Colin walked boldly up to his commander and touched his hat.

How handsome he looked as he did so! His whole attitude and bearing, the bright sparkle in his eye, and the flush upon his face, gave evidence of manly daring.

"I think, sir," he said, "as I was the first to suggest this plan of action, I ought to be allowed to volunteer to carry it out."

Kindly old Lieutenant Mildmay, "gallant and good," gazed at the boy for a moment in undisguised admiration ere he made reply. The thought that was then uppermost in his mind was verbally as follows:

"I promised by letter to this lad's mother to be a father to him. *Can* I let him lead this forlorn hope? I promised his *uncle* I would help him in every bold enterprise. *Can* I refuse his present request? No; the boy shall go."

"And so," he said, aloud, "you are to be the David that is to go out against this Goliath?"

"No, sir," replied Colin, laughing, "I'm going to take Goliath with me to carry the powder-bag." He motioned towards the marines and up stepped brawny young Duncan Robb.

"Scotland has it," said Duncan; "I'm ready, sir."

"Strip," cried Colin, "and let us be off."

In a minute more, what Artemus Ward called "extra garments" were thrown on the grass, the great bag was shouldered, and with brave hearts Colin and his foster-brother set out on their perilous task.

Man! Colin, lad," Duncan found time to say as soon as they had started, "I'm gladder than if I had been made king o' the Comoro Islands. My heart's in my mouth, Colin. It's down stream you're going," he continued, "and not straight up the brae, is it? Straight

up the brae would mean certain death, would it ? Oh, I see ; but, man ! how proud your auld uncle would be to see you now ! How proud your father will be o' his sailor son ! ”

“ Hush ! dear Duncan. We may never return. ”

They soon reached the part of the stream where Colin found it would be safest to cross, and happily for them they effected the transit without drawing the fire of the sentinels. The rocks at the other side were terribly steep, with never a bush to hold on by.

“ They'll never do it, ” cried Benbow, excitedly. “ They can't climb that rock. ”

“ They are both Highlanders, ” said Mildmay, quietly.

“ And one is a marine, ” added West.

“ Look ! they are up ! ” said Benbow.

They were up. But now they had to creep close by the foot of the wall for fully a hundred yards ere they reached the gate. It was a minute or two of intense excitement for those who watched them from the wood.

But Colin was cool. Both had stopped to breathe when they reached the cliff-top. Then—

“ I have the matches ready, ” said Colin.

“ The bag is safe, ” replied undaunted Duncan Robb.

“ Then we'll make a run for the gate. But hold secure ; don't let it be a race ; a run only. Haste might spoil all. Are you ready ? ”

“ Yes. ”

“ Then here's for off. ”

"Look! look!" cried Benbow. "The sentinels see them—they fire. Colin's down. He is up again and runs on——"

"Now for us to show," cried Mildmay, drawing his sword. "Rake the top of the wall with your rifles, Mr. West."

Just as Colin and Duncan reached the gate and placed their bomb, West and his men showed out at the river's bank, drawing the fire of those on the wall and themselves firing whenever they saw a chance.

And Colin and Duncan were kneeling close to the gate. Duncan weighted the bag against it with a great stone. Colin lighted a match, or tried to do so.

Did ever any one yet do anything well in a hurry? The first match went out, the second missed fire, the bullets were pattering on the wall near them; but the sentinels were also in a hurry, they took no aim. Poor Colin's fingers felt like great thumbs as he dived them a third time into the box, but he took more time. Hurrah! the fuse is alight. It spits fire.

"Run!" cried Colin. "Down hill we go."

Alas! this was the only mistake made. Had they gone back as they came they would have been safe.

Helter-skelter down the brae they rushed, longer-legged Duncan first.

He soon paused. His foster-brother had fallen, wounded and bleeding. The bomb would explode in a moment or two, but brave Duncan rushed back and seized and bore his comrade off amid a hailstorm of bullets.

Fortuna favet fortibus. Duncan reached the river in safety with his precious burden just as an explosion took place that made the very boulders rattle in the river, and came roaring back in a hundred-tongued echo from the hills and rocks. Not only was the gate blown to pieces, but a large tower on the north side of it had fallen.

"Charge, men, charge!" shouted Mildmay.

Duncan met the wild rush of armed determined men in mid-stream. They took no notice now of either him or the burden he bore, but made straight for the foe.

Duncan crossed and laid his foster-brother on the grass at the foot of the tree, where Surgeon McGee had placed those terrible instruments of operation that are more dreaded by our bravest soldiers and sailors than bullet or bayonet of a fighting foe.

Colin's shirt was red with blood, his face was pale, and his eyes were closed.

Duncan bent over him, and big tears chased each other down his face.

Then he drew his bare brown arm and hand across his eyes, and starting up, seized his rifle and bayonet, and rushed off to join the *mêlée*, but his cheeks weren't dry before he was in the very midst of the battle.

XXIII.

(AND LAST)—VICTORY—"THEODORA" AND "AURORA"
ORDERED HOME—THE "FLAG OF BRITANNIA."

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AMONG the first to fall in the passage across stream was poor Golava. He fell in the river shot through the brain.

The same volley wounded Benbow's little Othello. The boy crawled back and laid himself down under a tree. He quietly took up one of McGee's bandages—the doctor had gone on with the rest—and bound up his wounded leg.

"'Spect I is going to die," he said to himself. "Der is a drefful lot ob blood coming out. Dun know, am shuah, where it all comes from."

Then he fainted. Duncan Robb had found time to glance towards him, but thought the boy was dead.

In less than fifteen minutes the fort was taken, and the prisoners were saved.

Having hastily done his best for the wounded in this brilliant combat, Dr. McGee hastened back to see to Colin—on a day of battle surgeons must be everywhere.

For a considerable time he thought about nothing else save his patient.

He was lucky enough to find the bullet and to extract it, an operation that gave Colin McLeod a much greater chance of life. And when he had done all for his patient that his skill suggested, he had time to look around him, to listen and to think.

He noticed Othello, and went towards him. The boy's face was cold, his arm was pulseless. "He is dead, poor little fellow," said McGee to himself. "Hullo!" he continued, "a flash of lightning, and how black it is getting. And drops of rain begin to fall. The river will be swollen into a roaring torrent in a very short time. I'm not safe here, I don't want to be cut off, I shall cross at once."

For McGee had seen many a Highland stream come down in "spate," and knew well what a sudden storm in a mountainous land can do.

He did not take long to shift his camp and carry Colin over, and it was well he had done so.

The storm came on with awful fury, and in less than a quarter of an hour down came the river, carrying trees, and turf, and stones, and even boulders before it.

For the time being Mildmay was prevented from retracing his steps to the relief of the camp. He had left brave men and true behind him, however, and thought he had little to fear, for doubtless the river would fall as speedily as it had risen.

Gayly was a good sailor, and that means a good

soldier also, and no sooner had the main body of the little army left that night, under the guidance of the nigger-boy, than he set about fortifying the camp, and before daylight, by almost superhuman exertions, he had succeeded in throwing up a rampart all round, behind which it was possible for thirty determined British men to defy ten thousand savages.

It was well he did so, for hardly was the morning well advanced ere his picket was driven in, and soon after a determined attack was made on the camp.

The enemy had soon to retire, however, with the loss of many of their number. This taught them a lesson, and they were not slow to profit by it. They had learned something else as well ; they had found out that the men in camp were a mere handful, who might defend themselves for a time, but could not hold out long.

Another and even more energetic attack was made to storm the ramparts about two hours after the first ; and this, like the last, failed, though some of the boldest had actually succeeded in scaling the earth-work, but only to be "scuppered," as sailors call it, on the top of it. Sound travels far on a still day in this climate, and the noise of the blowing-up of the gates was distinctly heard by all. It was a welcome sound to Gayly and Quentin, but it caused the enemy to redouble their efforts to subdue the little stronghold before assistance might arrive and the siege be raised.

The tactics pursued in order to accomplish this task were excellent, and showed that the Poonasees,

savages though they were, were commanded by a captain who knew a good deal of the art of warfare. From the edge of the wood, which was on a level with the camp, a trench was zigzagged up to within seventy or eighty yards of the rampart.

No sooner was this finished than trees that were being felled in the forest were dragged up, and the construction of a tower commenced, by which the inside of Gayly's fort could be completely commanded.

It is not likely that Gayly and Quentin permitted the work to go on quietly. They did all in their power to harass the builders, but with little success. Higher and higher rose the pile, and by noon it was of such a height that had the men who swarmed upon it been better marksmen Gayly's fort would soon have been quite untenable, and every one within it have been slain or made prisoners. As it was, the only defence possible was effected by the spade rather than the rifle.

By two o'clock many of the sailors and marines lay dead or wounded, and among the dead, much to Quentin's grief, was Gayly himself. He had exposed himself for a moment on the rampart to roll back lifeless the next. By three in the afternoon things had come to such a pass that Quentin determined to make a sortie. Better die fighting sword in hand than remain a mere target to the enemy's bullets.

"Barclay," he said to the chief gunner, "we must make a rush."

Barclay was "making a reconnoissance," as he called

it, through a small loophole that he had formed of a few flat stones.

"One moment, sir," he replied. "Why, sir——"

"What is it, Barclay? What do you see?"

"Why—— Hurrah!" shouted Barclay. "Their tower is on fire!"

It was true. The light wind blew off the camp, smoke was seen rising from the foot of the great pile, and next minute the whole structure was one blazing mass, for the wood of which it was built was dry and hot with exposure to the sun.

"And here comes little Othello," cried the gunner. "Why, it must have been he, and no one else, who fired the stack."

It was true. When Dr. McGee had recrossed the stream, and the rain began to fall and patter on Othello's face, he began slowly to revive, and finally stretching himself, wearily opened his eyes. Then he sat up and looked about.

"'Specs nobody cares nuffin now 'bout poor Massa 'Thello," he said. "De ribber come down plenty big too, and de docta he hab take de buckra officer ober in his arms. 'Nebber mind de niggah chile,' he say to hisse'f; 'de niggah boy am good for nuffin now.' Well, I'se on'y a niggah chile arter all. What for I sit down and blubber? I go back to de camp directly. I get some food den. Dat is bettah dan sit and cry. I is so stiff and sore though. Nebber mind, I'se on'y a poor little niggah boy."

It was a long weary march that to Othello. But he found fruit in the forest, and that refreshed him, and so by-and-bye he came in sight of the camp.

"Dey am fighting for sure," he said, rubbing his eyes. "And poor Massa Quentin he gettin' de worst ob it. Berry much indeed. Why, right ober against de camp dere dey hab build de Tower ob Babel, all same's de kind ole cluggyman tell me 'bout. Why, dis niggah soon put an end to dat prank; dis niggah boy fire de tower. Ah! yah! Fire de tower and frizzle all de niggahs on de top. Ah! yah!"

Othello soon put his scheme into action. Nobody noticed the approach of the tiny black fellow, so he concealed himself at the foot of the pile and *in* the pile.

It took him quite a quarter of an hour to "make fire," as he called it, with some hard and soft wood. Both the grass and the timber had hours before become dry, and once alight they burned with fury.

The river went down as speedily as it had come up, and the camp was relieved about sundown.

The enemy, now utterly routed in three battles, withdrew entirely, and left our people unmolested. On our side, however, the losses were heavy enough. No less than three of the *Aurora's* officers were wounded, and several men were killed. Every one was sorry for poor Gayly. A smart, brave officer he had been, and no one remembered his faults or foibles now that he was gone.

All the dead were buried at the edge of the forest. A cairn marks the place of burial—a cairn that the

superstitious natives will not go near, either by night or by day.

McGee and the junior surgeon of the *Aurora* had their work cut out for them in attending to the sick ; but by slow degrees and in safety they were conveyed to the coast, and thence on board their own ships.

The *Aurora* and *Theodora* then sailed for the Cape, taking with them the prisoners they had released and leaving the Dahomeians and the Poonasees to settle their own never-ending quarrels in their own wild way.

The *Theodora* had now been over four years and a half in commission, and it had been a stirring one on the whole. No one, I believe, was tired of adventure, but it must be admitted that no one was sorry to learn on their arrival at the Cape that both the *Aurora* and *Theodora* were ordered home.

They sailed away together. They hardly lost sight of each other during the passage home, and they made Plymouth waters within a watch of each other.

And there they lay for hours till the ceremony of *pratique* had been gone through and the medical officer of health had declared them to be clean ships.

Then, and not till then, did the friends of those on board, who swarmed around the ships in boats, but who hitherto had to be content with words spoken from quarter-deck, from side-ladder, from port or bow, rush on board.

It was summer time, and the number of ladies on deck, and the laughing, talking, joking, ay, and weeping

—tears of joy—made the *Theodora* look as gay as a village green at fair time.

Nearly every one had some one to welcome him home, but for a time Colin looked in vain for a boat coming off to him. But yonder it comes at last, and in a few moments up the starboard ladder stumped old Captain Peter, with his wooden leg evidently newly stained and polished for the occasion. Behind him, looking somewhat abashed, for he was unused to scenes like these, came Colin's brother Roland.

Then Colin was indeed happy. He had about one hundred and fifty questions to ask his brother, and when they were all answered about three times over, then he led Roland below to his mess.

Roland was very much surprised indeed at what he took to be the smallness of the accommodation. To his eye, used to the great halls and rooms of a Highland castle, even the *Theodora* looked wondrous small.

The meeting between Mildmay and Captain Peter was cordial in the extreme, and it rejoiced Colin's heart to notice the respect with which the former treated his uncle.

In a day or two the court of inquiry—a mere service formality—was held on Colin and Blair. They were of course acquitted of all blame, and highly complimented for their watchfulness when on the island.

Colin dined that same night with Captain Blunderbore. His uncle was there, and Commodore O'Connell, and Quentin Steele, and Benbow.

Quentin and Colin said little; they kept quiet, respectfully quiet, and listened. But they enjoyed themselves none the less.

Next morning Mildmay received a letter from his London agents which contained a very pleasant surprise for him indeed. Padre Fedro had arrived in England with Sauva Rosa, and the lieutenant bade Colin good-bye and started off for town the same day.

As he stepped on board the train, dressed in plain clothes, Colin thought to himself he had never seen him looking so handsome, so happy, or so young before.

The *Theodora* was paid off in due time, and the officers bade each other farewell.

“Vowing oft to meet again,
They tore themselves asunder.”

Benbow was the same funny jolly little fellow to the last.

“McGee,” said Colin, “I have to thank you for saving my life.”

“Nonsense, man,” replied McGee. “Good-bye. Take care of yourself. You’re looking rather white yet.”

“Good-bye, Scottie,” cried Blair. “God bless you.”

“God bless *you*,” returned Colin, heartily, “and mind you come and see me. My brother Roland here will give you a week’s shooting.”

“That I will, gladly,” said Roland.

Good-bye, both. I’ll *come*,” cried Blair.

One fine morning about a fortnight afterwards Colin McLeod, now sub-lieutenant, found himself back once more in the dear old glen and at his father's house.

"I'm proud of you," his father said. His mother simply wept, as women folks will. But his uncle, with the old wooden leg looking more shiny than ever, was a sight to see and to hear! Colin was "his own boy."

"Bother it all," he said, "if he—Captain Peter—hadn't had his own way of it the lad would still have been pottering around in some flagship, a fresh-water sailor, a long-shore chap, a mere Jack o' Lantern."

Blunderbore did get his promotion, though he was not made an admiral, and old Commodore O'Connell retired as a Rear.

D'Austin was made an A. P. (Assistant-Paymaster), and got a shore billet in an admiral's office, which suited him better than going to sea.

Quentin, Colin's dearest friend, found himself heir to a snug fortune on his return home, and the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty (capital letters, Mr. Printer, please, or I, the author, will be tried by court-martial and lose my half-pay) graciously permitted him to retire. Benbow at this moment has a command of his own, and is making it hot for the Arabs out on the East Coast. Last, but least only in point of rank, Duncan Robb is a sergeant, and a bolder or smarter never stood in front of a company.



Just three years after these stirring events Colin McLeod—now lieutenant (epaulets at last) led to the altar the beautiful daughter of retired Captain Mildmay. Quentin and Benbow were both there, the latter as brisk as ever.

But of the doings at the castle on the day Colin and his bride—with little Othello up on the front beside the coachman—drove away to spend their honeymoon, I am not going to speak. Something should always be left to the imagination of the reader; but I may say this much: Dear Mildmay, the gallant and good, looked serenely happy, and Benbow remarked of Colin's uncle that he really was a grand old fellow, in grand old form. And to all Captain Peter's yarns that day and evening there was no more delighted listener than old Dominie Clayton.

In the grand hall of the castle—it has a fireplace in it big enough to roast an ox—a select company of blue-jackets not only dined but danced. Barclay the gunner was there. I give just one verse of a song he sang, and a ringing one it is:

“How the heart of each Briton doth beat when on high
The flag of Britannia unfurls to the sky;
And gloriously braveth the battlefield's shock,
As the waves vainly dash on the storm-beaten rock.
There's many a banner hangs drooping its head,
For the strength that sustained it is nerveless and dead,
And the hearts that once followed it on to the field
Left no kindred spirits its honour to shield.
But the flag of Britannia, the flag of the brave,

Triumphant it floateth o'er land and o'er wave ;
And proudly it braveth the battle and blast,
And when tattered with shot it is nailed to the mast
 "Chorus—The flag of Britannia," etc.





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